

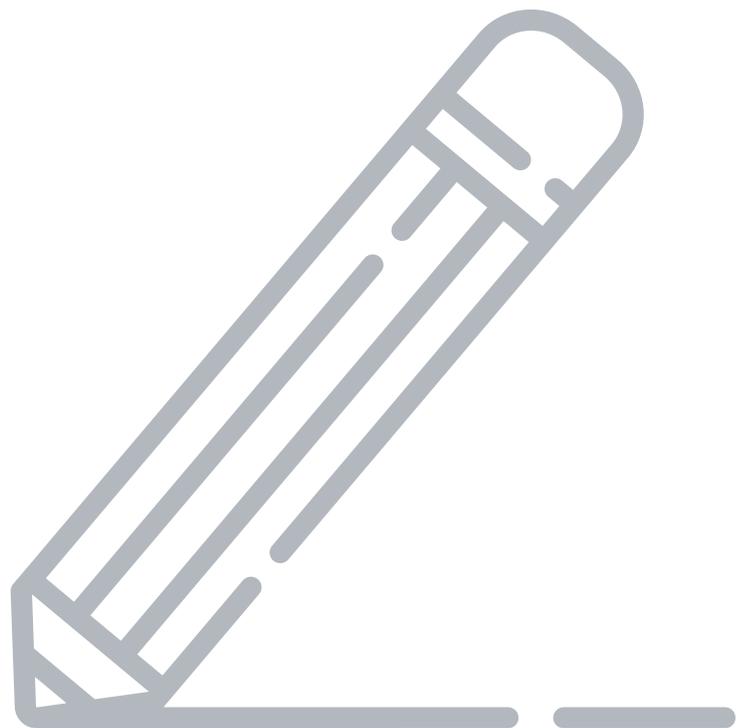
About me



The 'About me' sections are for you to fill in with information about yourself. They can be shared with a partner, family, friends and healthcare professionals - it's up to you.

They are dotted throughout this guide and can be brought together under the About me divider you will find at the end of the guide.

Writing down your information may help others to understand your decisions and know what you want to happen if you become unwell. It may also help you to prepare for healthcare appointments.



About me

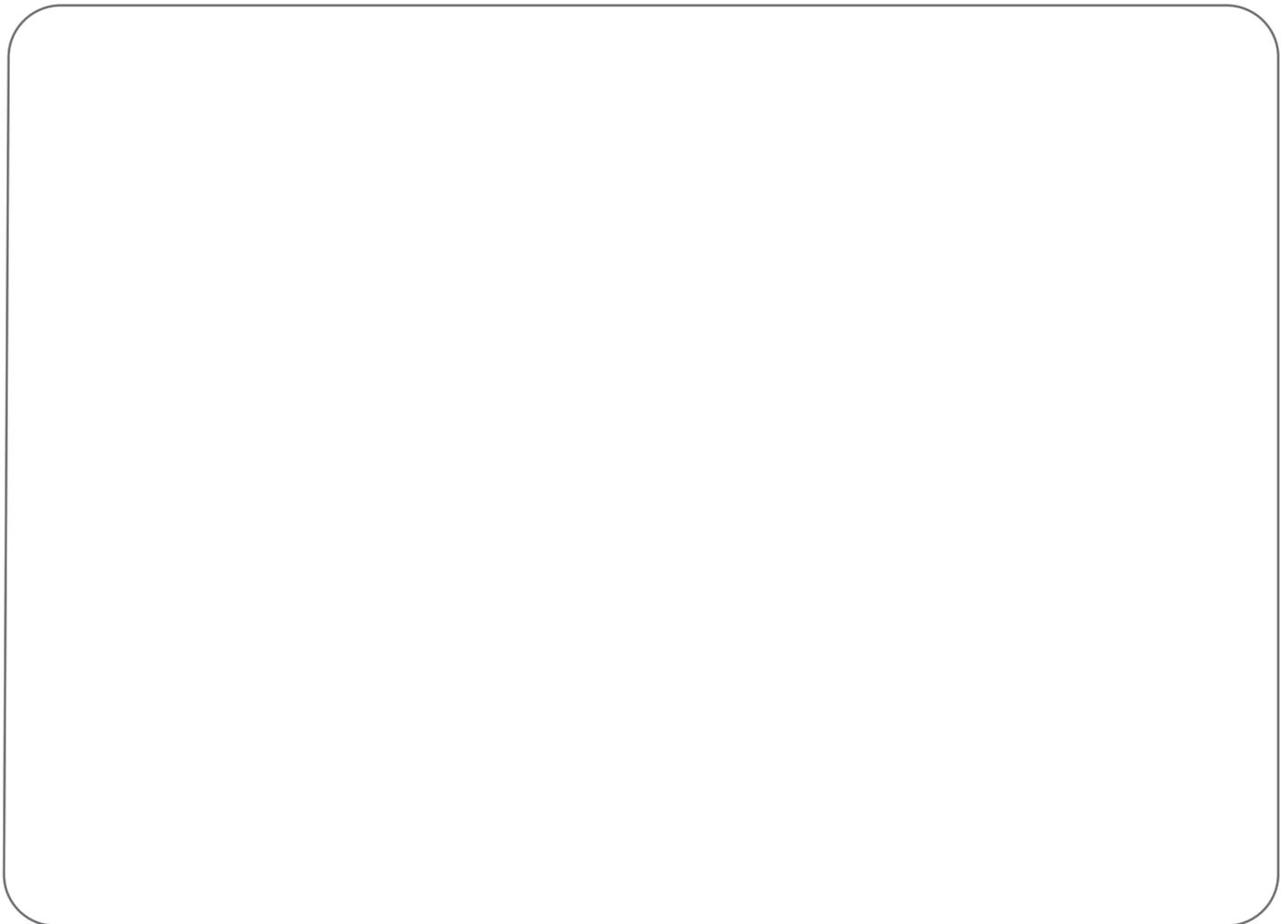
Reflecting on the decision to start a family or have another baby

The following questions are designed to provide you with a starting point to help you explore how you are feeling about having a baby.

You may find this section useful to revisit once you've had time to read through the information in this guide.

Spend some time noting down your thoughts below. You may find it helpful to work through these questions with a partner, family member or a friend.

What are my worries and fears for having a baby, or not having a baby?

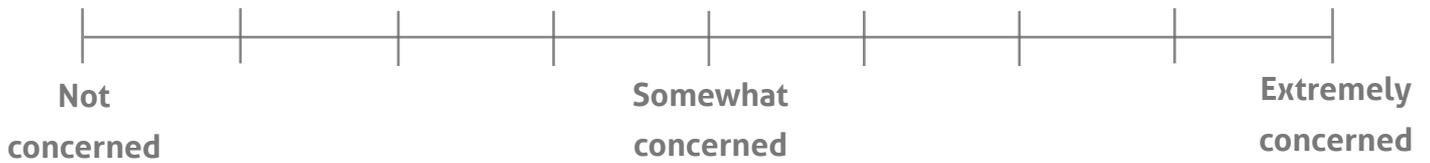


These statements may help you to think about what you'd find helpful to talk through with those close to you, healthcare professionals or peer supporters from organisations such as Action on Postpartum Psychosis (APP) or Bipolar UK.

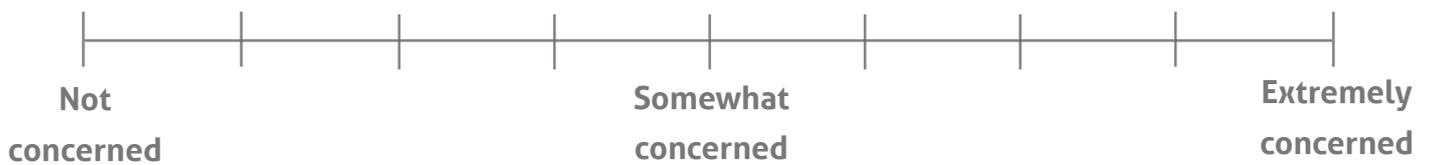
Consider the statements below - how do you relate to each one?

Put a cross on the scale at the point that best fits how concerned you are

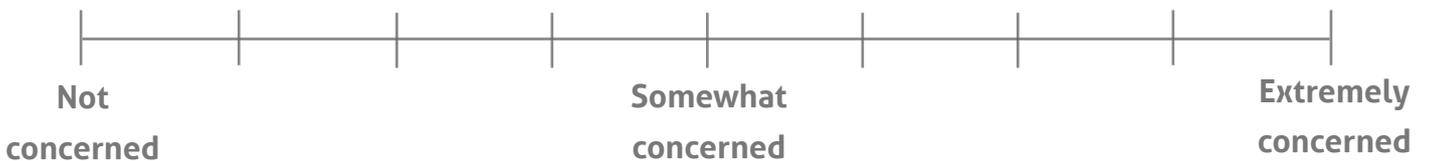
The chance of becoming unwell if I become pregnant



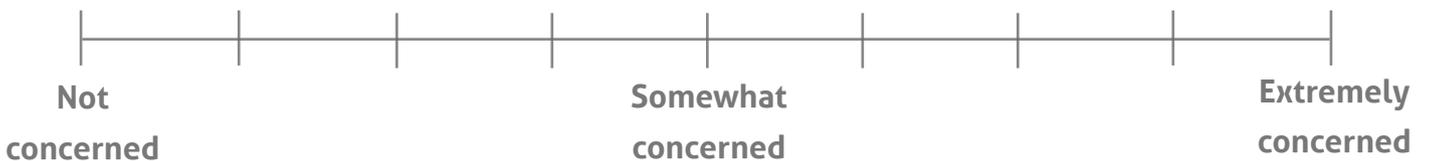
How being a mum would impact on my illness



Not being able to stay on my current medication

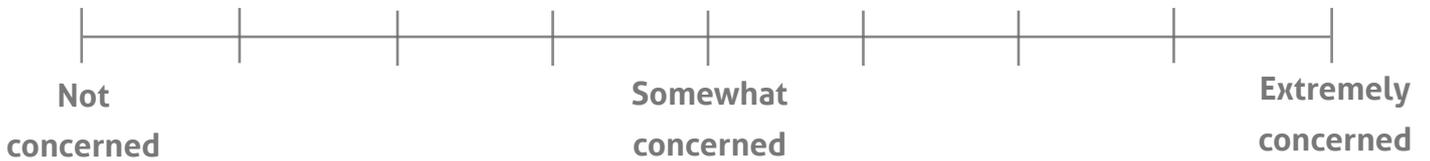


Coping with everything that comes with having a baby

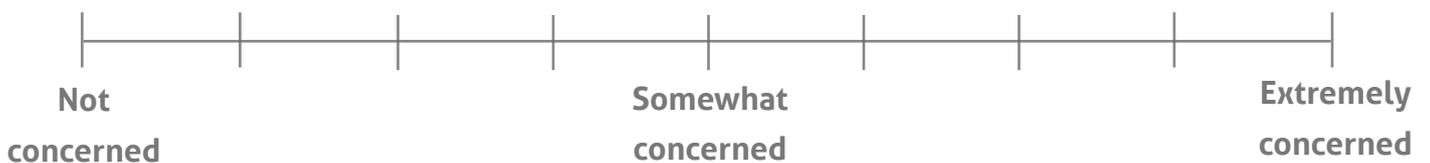


About me

Being the parent I want to be



Bonding with my baby if I become unwell

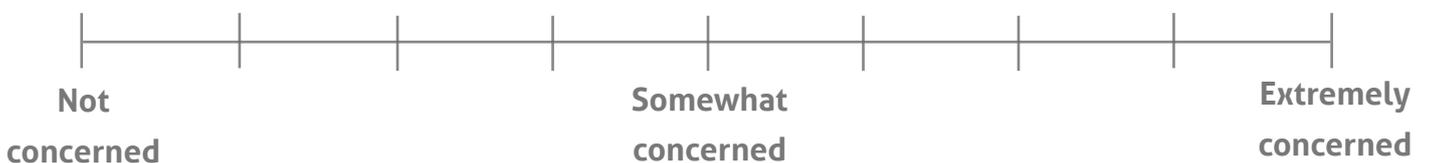


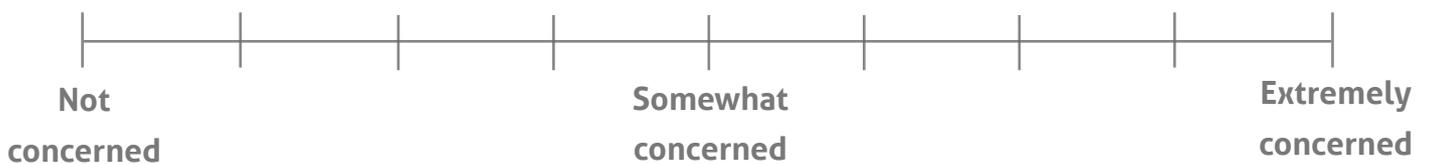
Are there any important considerations for you personally that are not listed here?

Use the blank sections or the note box below to write down your own personal considerations that are important to you:

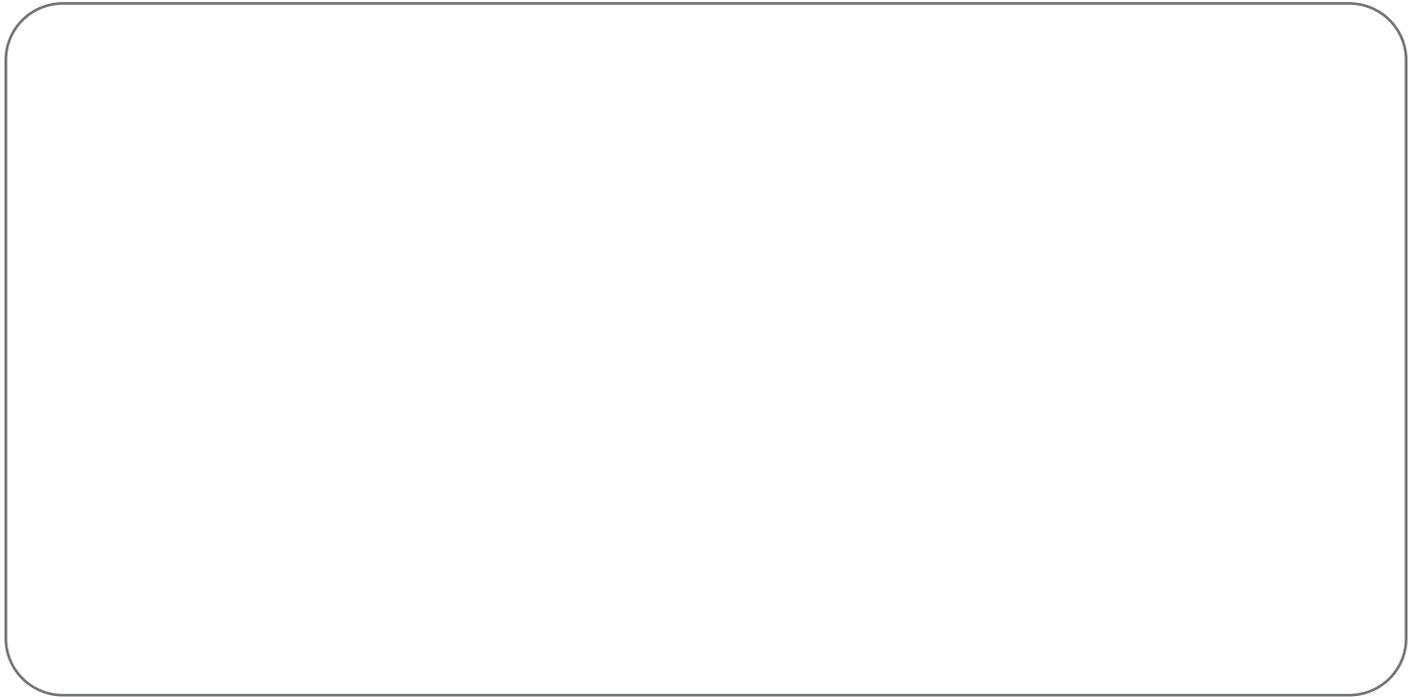
My other important consideration: _____



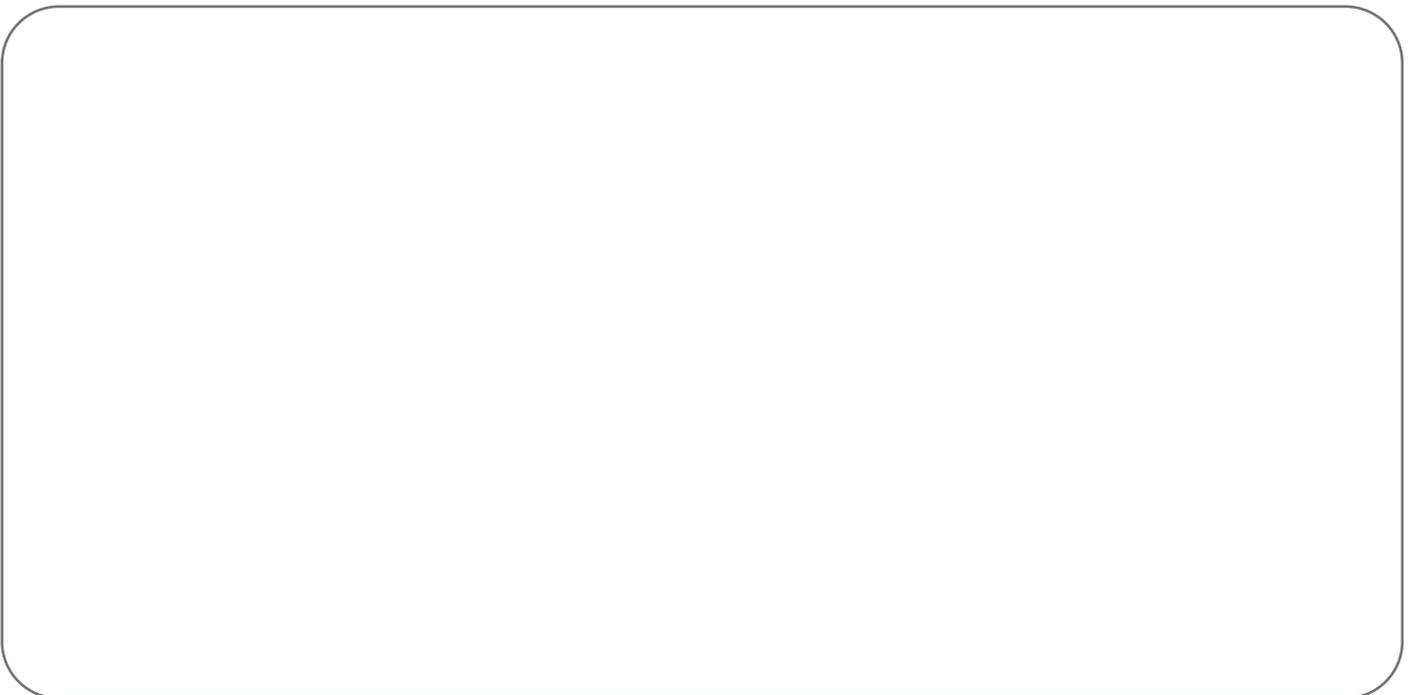




In what ways can a partner, friend or family member support me with this

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Additional notes

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About me

When is the right time for me to have a baby?

Factors that may affect this decision will be different for everyone. Here are some things that may be important to consider:

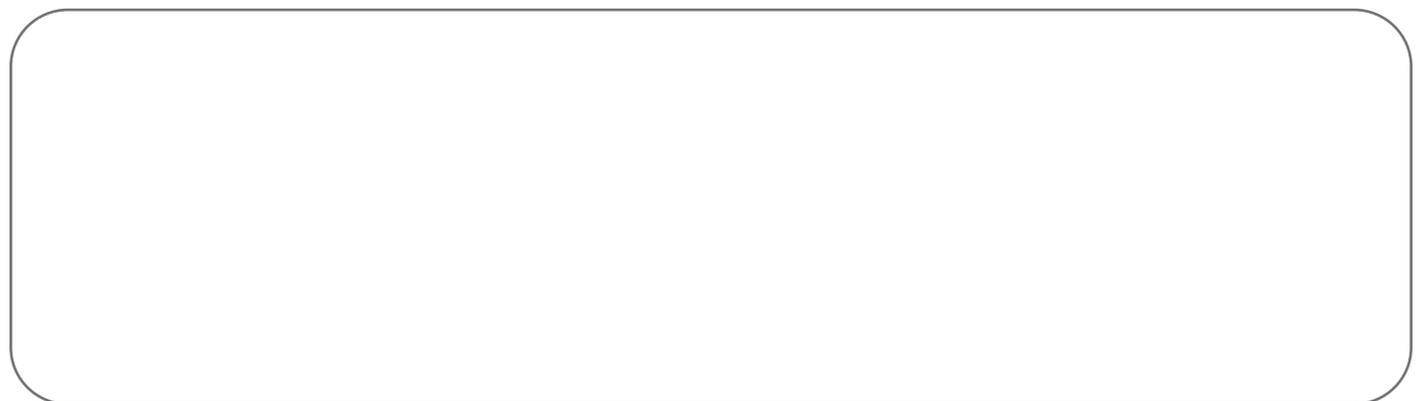
- Your age
- The right time for you in terms of your career or your relationship
- The support system you have around you
- Your mental and physical health
- Financial factors
- Housing factors



Who can I talk to that can help me make a decision?

There may be pre-conception consultations available to you from a perinatal mental health service. A good place to start is discussing what services are available in your area with your GP.

It will be helpful to discuss your thoughts and feelings with those close to you. Many women also find it helpful to access peer support services through third sector organisations.



About me



Previous episodes of mental illness

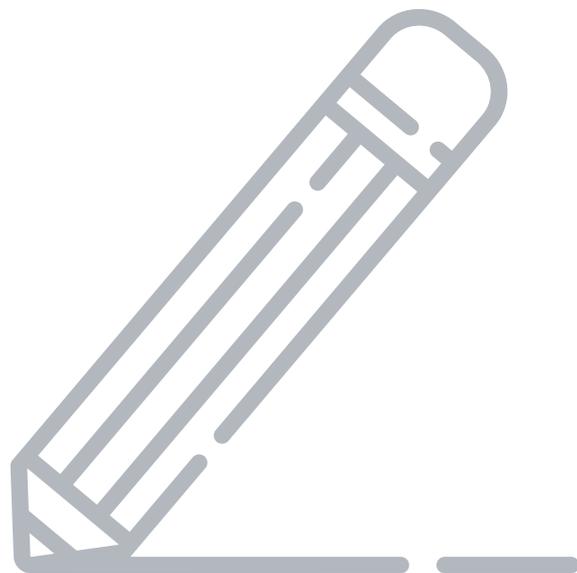
Information about previous episodes of mental illness can help predict and plan for future episodes.

It will be helpful for your healthcare professional to be aware of your mental health history as you make plans and decisions relating to your pregnancy and after you have your baby.

This section is for you to write about previous episodes of mental illness that you have experienced.

You will see that you have the option of either writing about these by filling out a life chart or by writing in the note boxes.

Do what works best for you.



About me



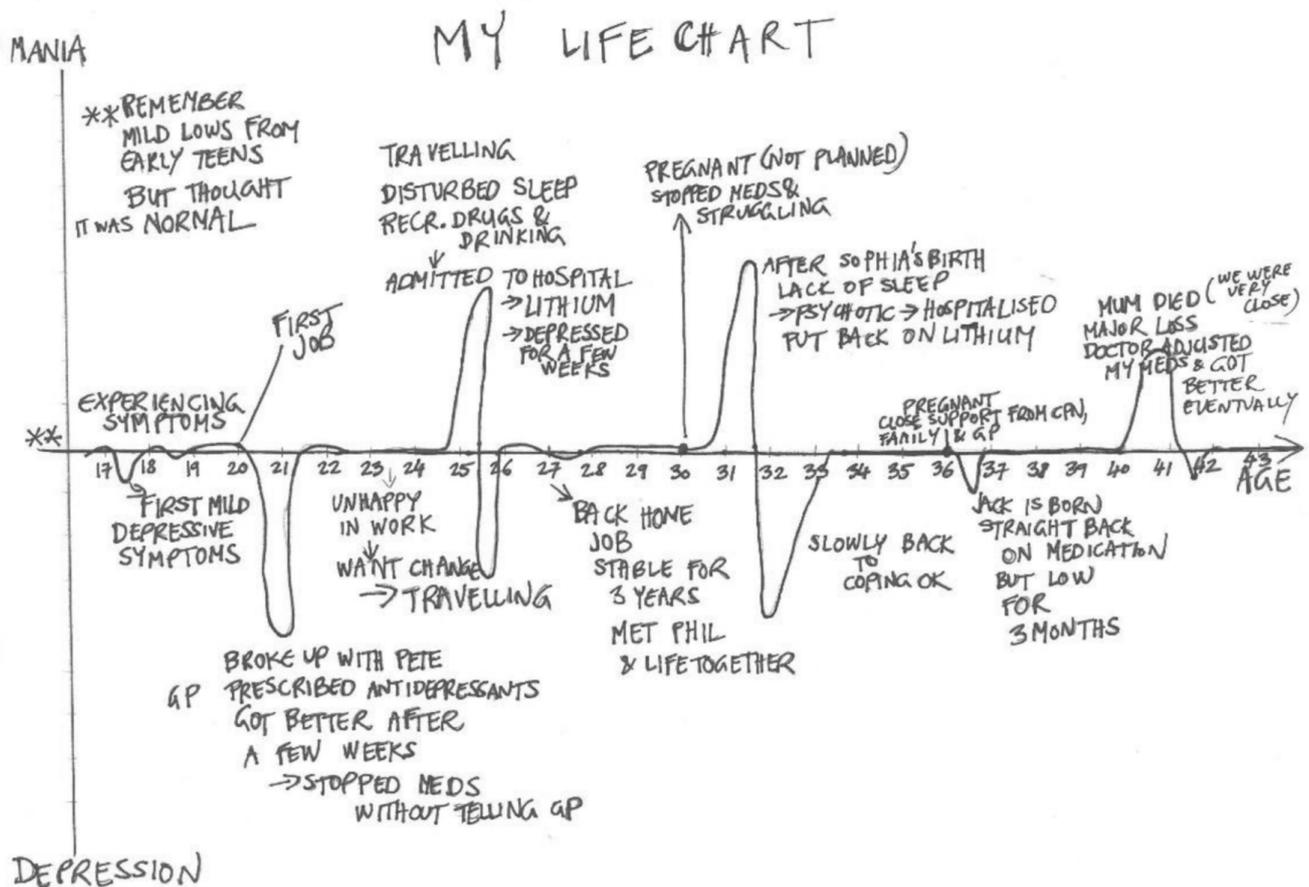
Drawing a life chart

A life chart can be useful to visualise your history, and see if there are any associations or triggers to your mood episodes.

Before you start you may find it helpful to make some bullet points or notes about important things that you'll be including in your life chart.

Drawing a life chart might not be right for everyone – if you prefer to make a few notes instead, that's fine – do whatever works for you.

Below is an example of a filled-out life chart. Your life chart may be more or less detailed than this.



Here are some suggestions on what you can include in your life chart:

- How old are you now?
- How old were you when you first experienced problems with your mood/mental health?
- At that time, do you think you had depression (low mood) or mania (high mood) or something else?
- On a scale of 0-10 how severe was this episode (for example, needing to go into hospital would score a 10, needing to start on medication would score a 5, a definite change from normal, but without many problems would score a 1)?
- Roughly, how long did this episode of illness last?
- Were there any possible triggering factors?
- Did you require treatment? Were you treated as an outpatient or an inpatient?
- Were you treated with medication or psychological therapies?
- How old were you when you next experienced serious problems with your mood, including any previous episodes during pregnancy or after birth?
- Repeat this process for any other episodes, and write down any other major life events you would like to include.
- Have you noticed any effect on your mood from use of contraception or hormonal treatments?

Notes for life chart

Mania



Depression

Age



Previous episodes of mental illness

What mental health conditions have you experienced (not related to pregnancy and childbirth)?

e.g. number of episodes, diagnoses, medication and/or treatment received

What mental health conditions have you experienced (not related to pregnancy and childbirth)? continued...

Previous episodes of mental illness during pregnancy or after birth

Information about previous episodes of illness in pregnancy or after having a baby, if this is not your first pregnancy:

- Have you previously experienced any mental health episodes during pregnancy or after birth?
- How severe was the episode? Did you require treatment?
 - Were you treated as an in-patient or an outpatient?
 - Were you treated with medication?
 - Were you treated with medication immediately after birth?
- Did you experience psychosis during the episode?
- How long did the episode last?
- Did the episode affect your ability to function? In what way?

Family history of mental illness

Has your mother or a sister experienced bipolar or postpartum psychosis?

Write any information that you know about their symptoms, episode severity or the treatment that they received below:



Knowing your chances of becoming unwell during the postpartum period can help you to prepare as best you can in advance.

About me



Your medication and treatment information

This section is designed to help you record information about treatments that worked for you, or did not work well. This will help you work with your healthcare professionals and partner or others supporting you when making decisions about pregnancy and birth.

Use the next pages to record your current medication and previous medications you have taken:

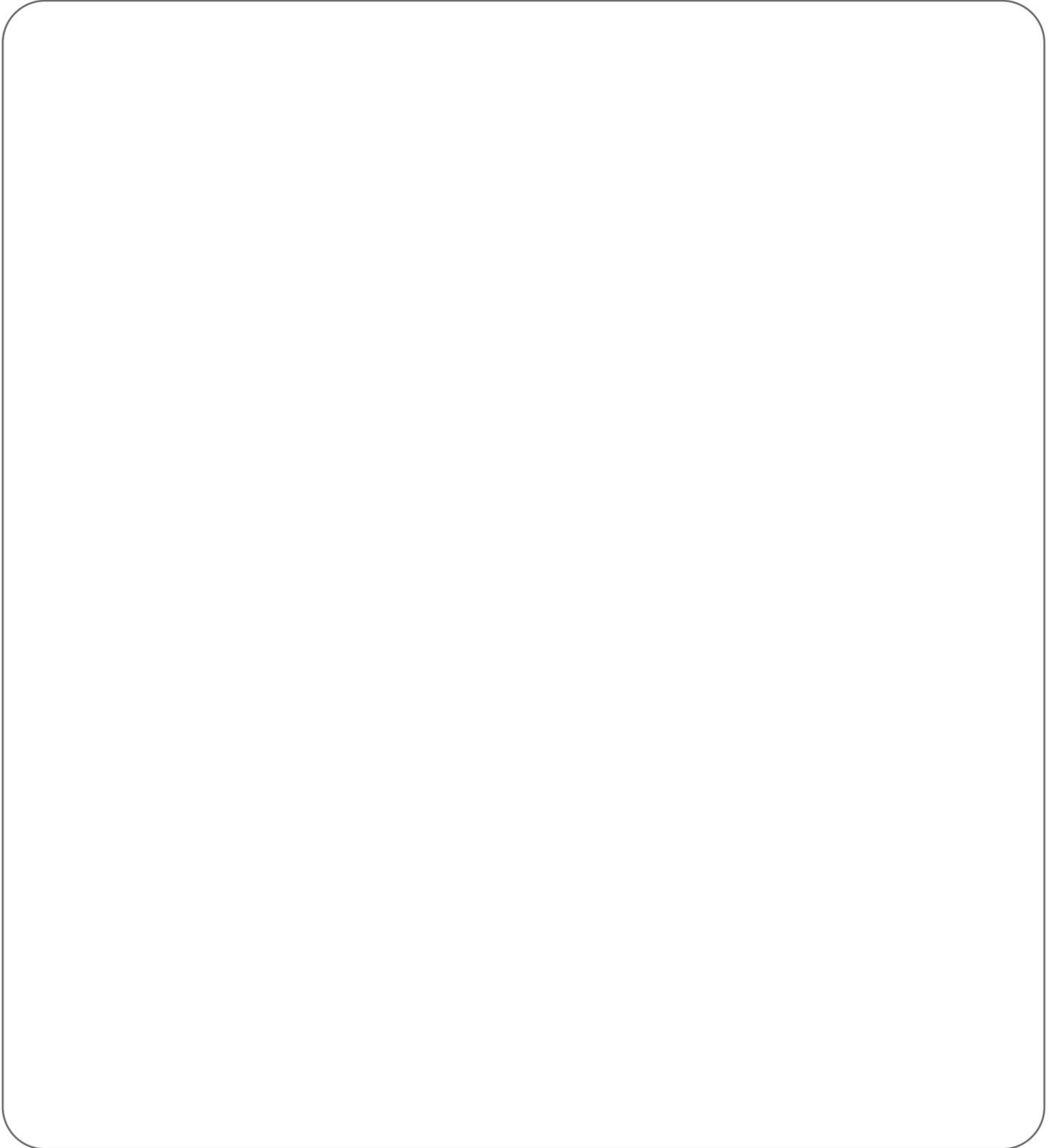
- Name of current medication - Dose - Date started	Any side effects?	Do they help?

About me

Psychological therapies

Have you received any psychological therapies e.g. cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)?

- What have you tried? What helped? What didn't?



About me

What do I need to think about when making decisions about medication?

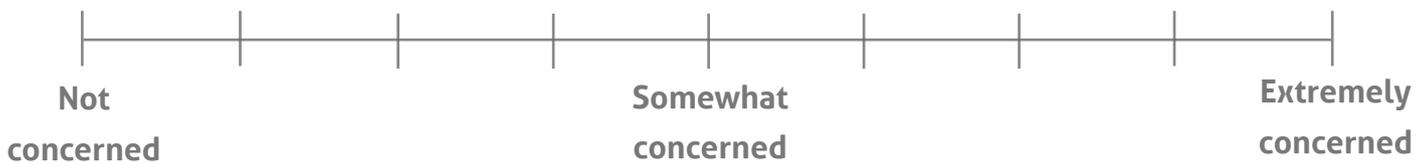
Making an informed decision about medication will involve considering your own thoughts and preferences alongside the evidence-based information and advice from your healthcare professional.

These decisions are not easy. These statements may help you to think about what you'd find helpful to talk through with your healthcare professional.

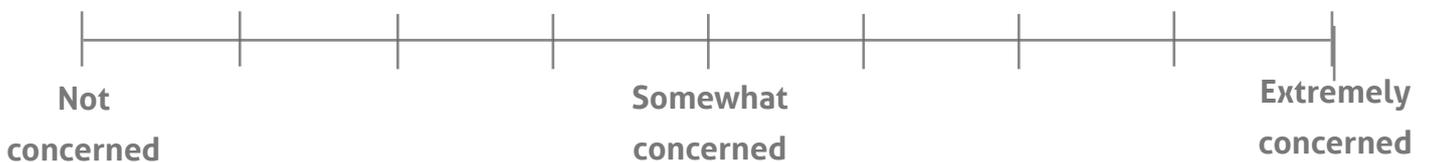
Consider the statements below - how do you relate to each one?

Put a cross on the scale at the point that best fits how concerned you are

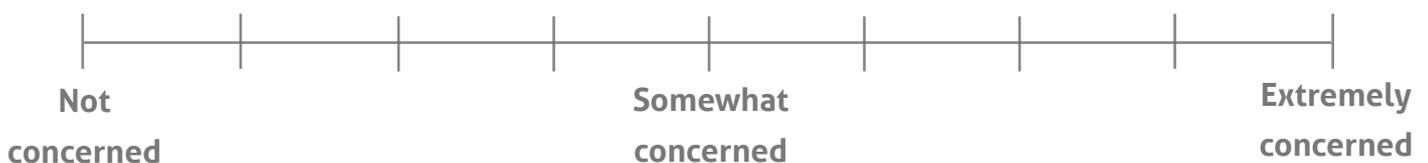
Staying well during pregnancy may be less likely if I stop medication



Not taking medication and becoming unwell in pregnancy may affect my baby



Taking medication during pregnancy may be associated with some risks for my baby



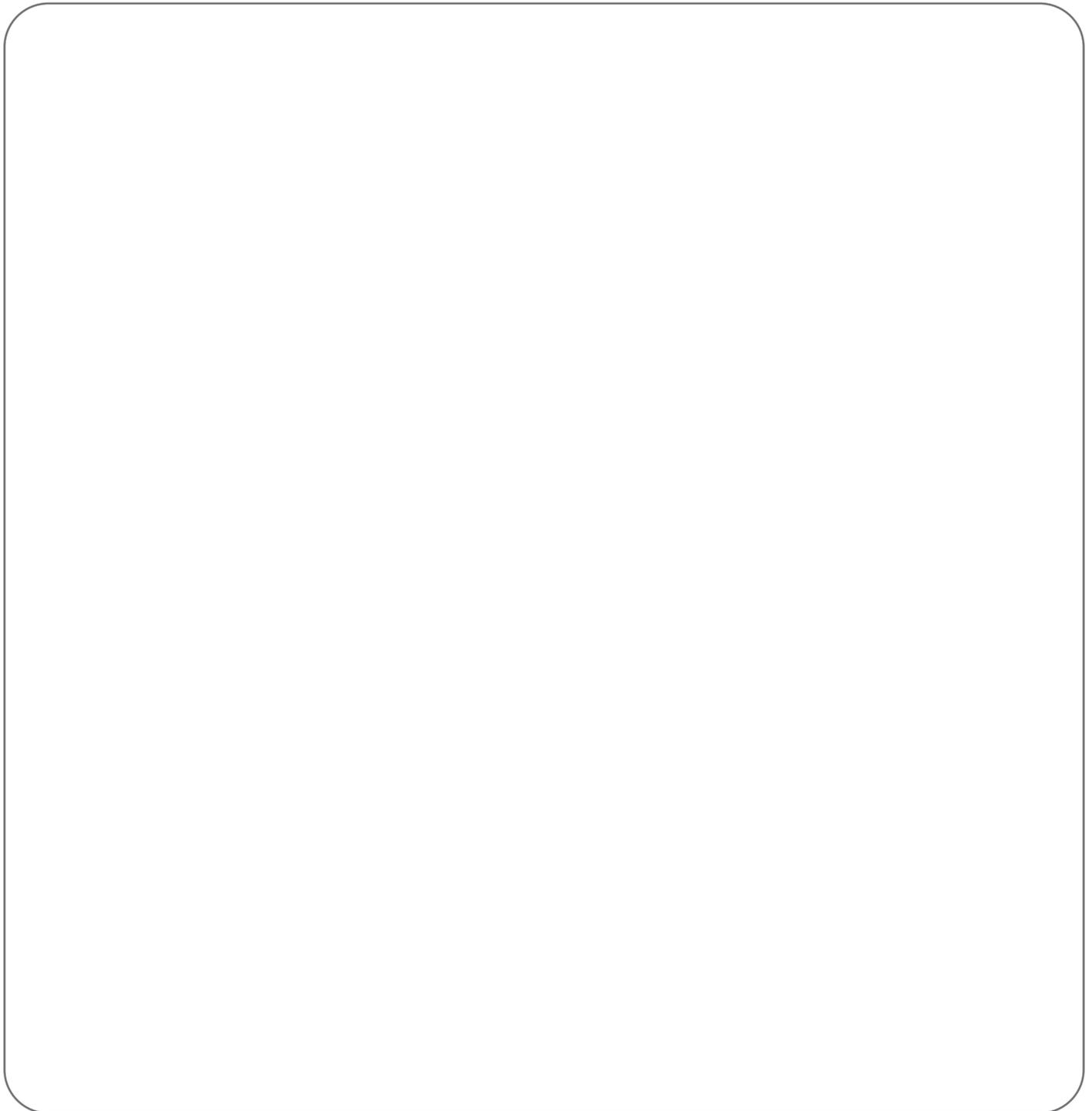
Needing to take higher doses or other medication if I become ill in pregnancy



About me

Notes

You can use this space to list questions and concerns when preparing for appointments. You can also make notes from the conversations with healthcare professionals during your appointments and outline your next steps.

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Early warning signs that I'm becoming unwell

Looking back at times where you've been unwell with your mental health, you may have noticed certain thoughts, feelings or behaviours that emerge early on in an episode.

Recognising these early warning signs and sharing them with those you are close to may help you get help quickly when you're becoming unwell. Write these in the box below.

If you are unsure if you experience any warning signs, you could talk to others around you and ask if they noticed any warning signs, or what they think the first symptoms you experience are.

You could also take a look at information about symptoms in Section 1 of this guide ('How might childbirth impact on my mental health?' page 9)

Early warning signs

My personal triggers

Have you noticed anything that you feel triggered previous episodes? If you have experienced postpartum psychosis, was there anything else that you feel increased your risk of becoming ill?

Write these here:

e.g. getting less sleep, changes in medication

You may want to think about times when you have been at your most stable in your mental health

What were the things that may have helped keep you well?

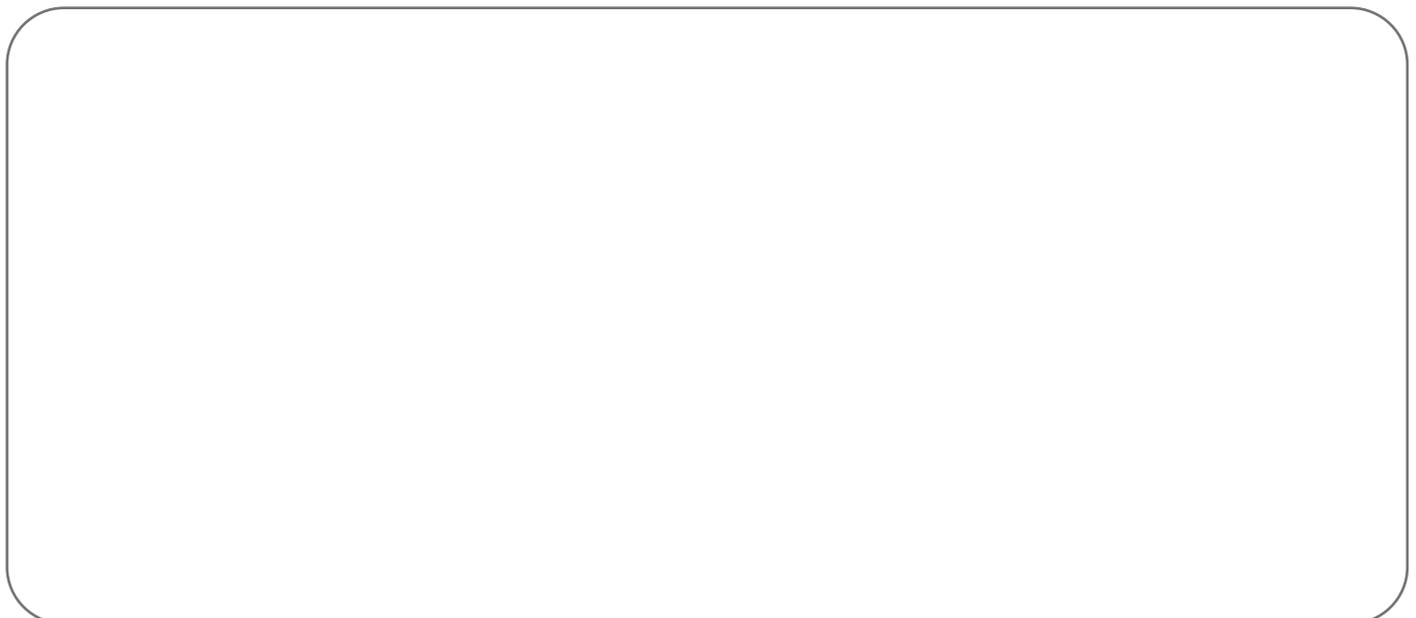
Was this a particular medication? Or were there other things like practising self-management, mood monitoring or making changes to your lifestyle that could have been important?

Use this box to write down anything you feel may have helped you to keep well:



Notes

Is there anything that you are planning to put in place or prepare?



Bringing it all together

7

Now that you have come to the end of the guide, you may be better placed to make some of the difficult decisions we have discussed.

Reading through the information may have answered some questions you had and made clear the questions that you still need to ask.

You may now be looking to develop plans and discuss further with your healthcare professionals.

This section is designed to help you plan your next steps.

Next steps

Consider each of these questions and use the boxes below to write down how you feel and any plans that you have related to each one.

If you are currently pregnant, some of these questions might not apply.

Am I clear about my reasons for wanting to have a baby? **Yes**

No

Do I know which concerns relating to having a baby are **Yes**

most important to me? **No**

Do I have enough information about my chance of **Yes**

becoming unwell during pregnancy and after birth? **No**

Do I understand the medication and other treatment **Yes**

options available during pregnancy and after the **No**

baby is born? **Yes**

Do I have a clear plan in place in case I become **No**

unwell? **Yes**

Am I clear about the support that may be **No**

available to me during pregnancy and after

birth from both professionals and significant

others?

If you feel you don't have enough professional support, you may want to think about what steps you need to take to find out what's available to you in your area.

If you are not currently under the care of a community mental health team or a perinatal mental health team, the first step in accessing more support will be to contact your GP.

For more information about professional support during the perinatal period, refer to Section 3 'What support may I receive during pregnancy and after having a baby?' on page 31.



What do you need more information about?

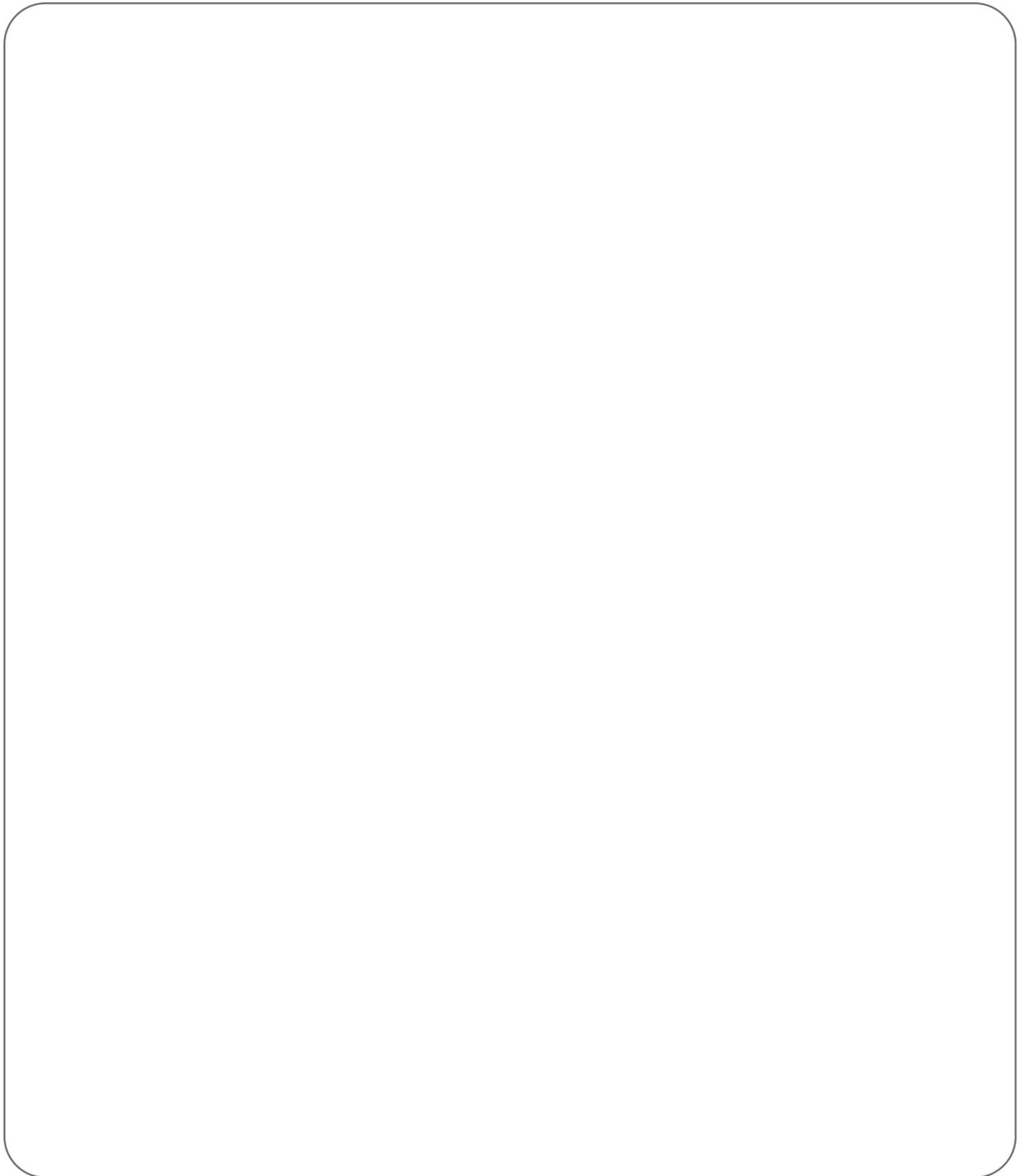
You may have questions that you haven't got answers for yet and plan to ask your healthcare professional about or look into further yourself. Use this space to identify these questions:

Questions What questions do I have for my healthcare professional?	My notes Information to help answer my questions:

Making a plan

You may like to use the space below to summarise any steps that you now plan to take:

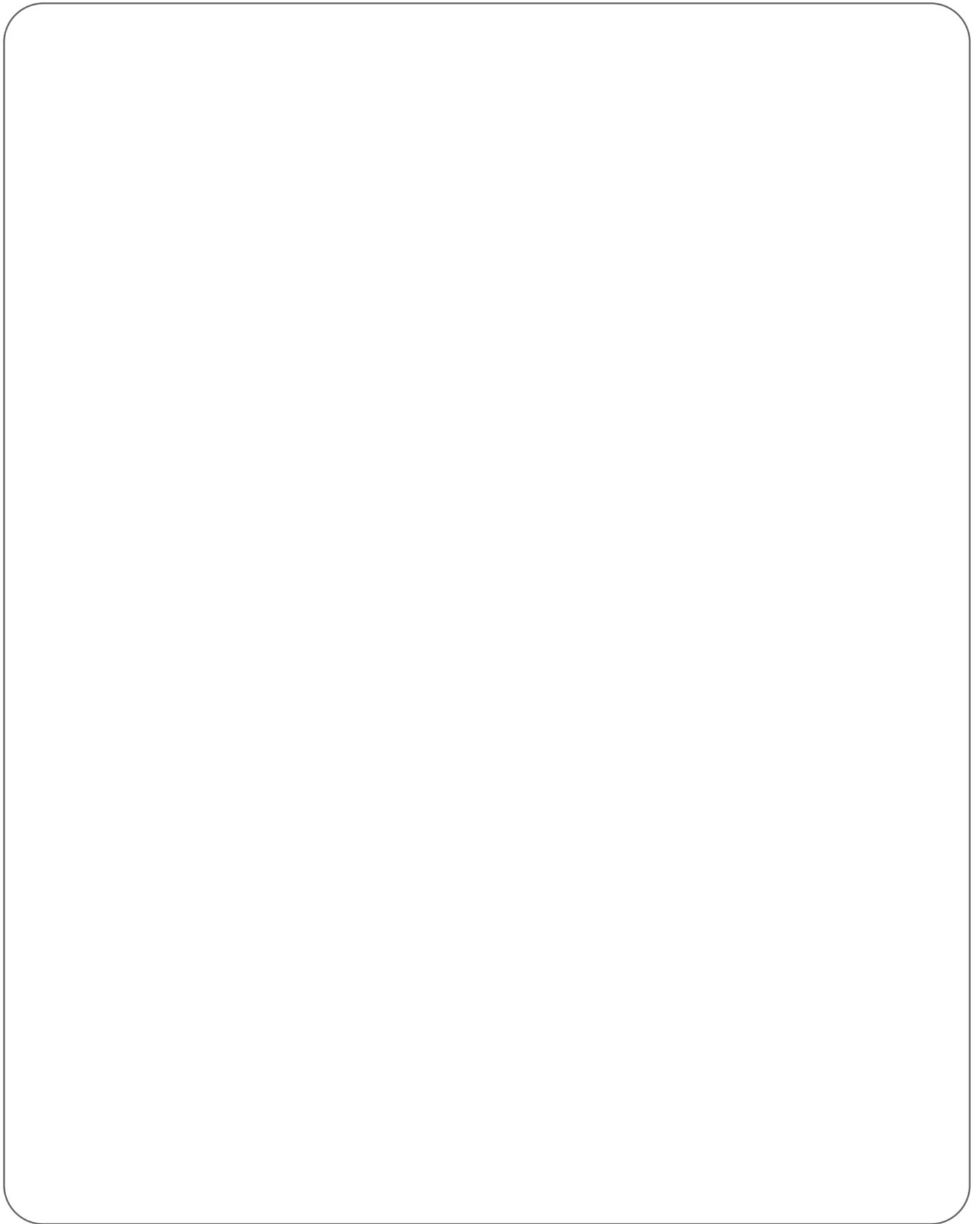
eg Make an appointment with my GP to discuss pre-conception services available in my area

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Notes

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Notes

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About me



Important contacts

Use the list below to record contact details for those who are involved in your care and friends, family and significant others who will be able to provide support. This list could be very helpful during times of crisis or relapse.

Making it easily accessible for partners, family or friends will help them to access help for you easily should you need it.

Name:	Role:
Contact details:	
Name:	Role:
Contact details:	
Name:	Role:
Contact details:	
Name:	Role:
Contact details:	
Name:	Role:
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