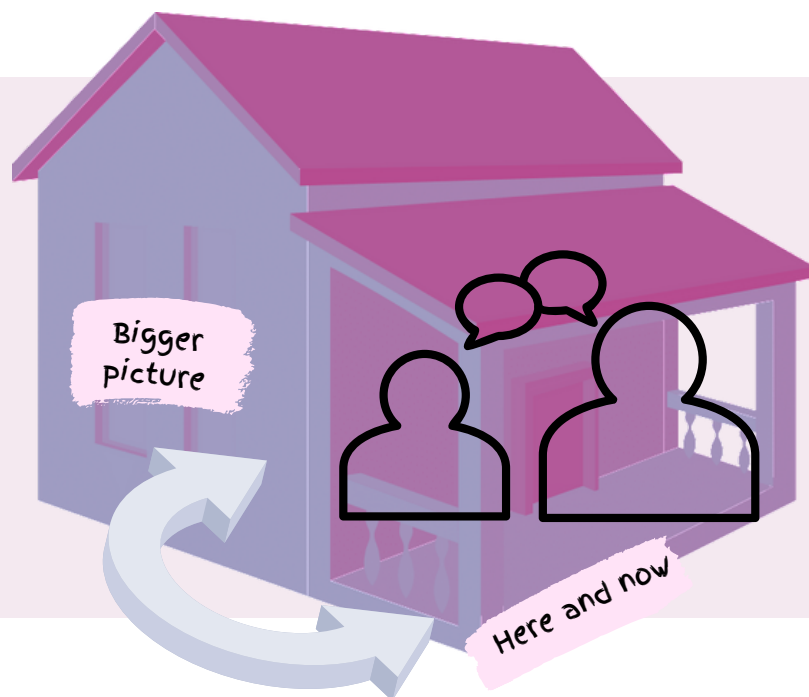


# THE MAXI FORMULATION

Philip Kinsella and I have worked together in clinical practice and as fellow academics on a CBT training course. During this time he shared a template for a maintenance cycle that includes cognitive processes. I adapted it slightly and experimented with it in different settings. I have named it the **maxi** formulation, as it provides more detail than a vicious cycle, and can be developed into a longitudinal formulation.

I find it a good tool for assessment, when you may hear information about processes or different levels of cognition and want to make a note of this for a later date. I use the metaphor of a house with a porch. At assessment you are on the porch focusing on the here-and-now, but if the door is slightly open then you may get a peep inside. You can still do a simple maintenance cycle with the client until they become socialised to the CBT model, then introduce the maxi formulation if using a cognitive approach.



## Example of using the maxi formulation

Sam is a man I worked with who presented with generalised anxiety disorder (GAD). He was 26 and lived in a shared house. The trigger for this episode of intense anxiety was the delivery of a package he was expecting. It was a skateboard he had ordered. He didn't get to the door in time so his friend handed him the parcel. Sam was extremely worried that his friend would ask questions about the parcel and judge him for it.

A simple vicious cycle would capture some of the NATs and worries but the maxi formulation provides a more detailed understanding of why this situation felt so threatening to Sam. It evoked memories of disapproval from his father of previous purchases of sporting equipment, and shows the activation of his core beliefs in response to the breaking of the rule (he was not in **control** of receiving the parcel, so feared something bad would happen - judgement and rejection). His friend did ask what it was and Sam wanted to lie but didn't and the friend was very interested and they chatted about their memories of having skateboards when they were younger. Sam found the maxi formulation very helpful to understand why he was so anxious about something that appeared trivial.

### Situation or triggers

Amazon delivery man came to the door with my parcel. My housemate got to the door before me and took the package and asked me what it was.

### Cognitions

#### Content

##### NATs

I shouldn't have bought the skateboard  
I will have to lie about it

##### Core beliefs

I am not good enough  
Others are judgemental  
world is uncertain

##### Rules for living

If I am not in control, then something bad will happen

#### Processes

Attentional focus

Threat

Images/ memories

Memory of dad's disapproval of other sport equipment

Thinking biases

Overgeneralising

Catastrophising

All or nothing

Worry & rumination

What if he thinks I am stupid?  
Then I will have to leave

### Behaviours

Wanted to lie but didn't  
Told him what it was and we chatted about skateboards

### Physical sensations

Tight chest  
heart racing  
tension  
trouble breathing  
shakey

### Emotions

Anxiety 100%

