

GM HEALTH HUB

UNDERSTANDING AND OVERCOMING WORRY

Worry - You're four steps away from fixing it for good!

Background

There's nothing wrong with worrying. You're just doing too much of it! If you never worried, let's face it, you'd be dead by now. You might have been hit by a truck because you didn't see any need for caution when crossing the road. Or you might have caught food poisoning because you didn't care about cooking food properly. Without some thought about what might go wrong, we'd all be in trouble. But most of us, at some time in life, find we're concentrating on the dark side of things too much. The worrying thoughts just go round and round until everything seems worse. Worry can also affect us physically - dry throat, butterflies in the tummy, sweating, chest pains, headaches, feeling washed out or exhausted, fast shallow breathing. And worry changes what you do. Some people avoid the things that bother them, but this only keeps the problem going. Some people drink, eat or smoke too much, or do other things that seem to help, but don't. And lots of people toss and turn, going over and over their problems, which just makes them bigger and bigger. But now there's good news: whichever way worry affects you, this plan can help you beat it. It's even got an easy name: Face it, Fix it, Forget it.

No worry on earth can stand up to the triple F system! Each of the three following strategies will help you beat a particular sort of anxiety.

1. Stand up to the thing you're scared of - FACE IT

Think about one of the things you avoid doing. Do other people seem able to do it? Can you imagine yourself doing it for just ten seconds? Would you survive such a tiny amount of time? If the answer is yes to those questions, you've already begun to face and fix your fear. You've imagined yourself in a scary situation and survived. Imagine it again. And again, and again, until the thought of facing down your problem, just for a few seconds, becomes familiar. Now think about how you'd turn what you imagined into reality. Think about the small, steady steps you could take to build up your confidence and actually place yourself in that shop or on that phone call, just for a tiny amount of time. Write down each of these steps and decide on what day and at what time you're going to take the first one. It's just a tiny step, remember, so it may simply involve opening the front door (if you worry about being in busy places and are staying inside too much), or looking out of a closed upstairs window (if you're frightened of heights). Then, really take that first step, and give yourself a pat on the back - you're at the beginning of the end of your fears!

2. How do you get to the top of a huge climbing wall? - FIX IT

If you know what's wrong, you're already on the way to fixing it. For example, if you're worrying because you're in debt, you know that getting in control of your money will help sort things out. The answer will also be quite clear if you're worrying about a relationship, getting a job, or drinking too much. Fix the particular problem and you can stop worrying about it. Often, you don't even have to fix the problem, you just have to make a plan to fix the problem. Your mind will love the idea that you know what to do, and will stop being anxious and start being helpful. But how do you make a plan? What if your problem is so huge that you can't even see where to start? That's when you need to think about how you would get to the top of a climbing wall....

1. Break the climb into a series of small chunks or steps.
2. Tackle each step/chunk at a time. It's the same with your problem. No matter how big it seems, you can solve it by breaking it up into smaller bits and working on one at a time. It might take ages, but you'll get there in the end, and your worry will disappear along with your problem.
- 3.

Read to start? Then what you need is our Easy 4-Step Plan

Step 1 - Break your problem into chunks: You can do anything if it's broken into small enough pieces.

Step 2 - Think of creative ways to tackle the first chunk: Take one of the little pieces and make a list of the different ways you might do it.

Step 3 - Choose an idea and make a plan to do it. Make sure your plan has small, simple steps.

Step 4 - Check the plan and put it into action: Is your plan easy to do? Then what are you waiting for? Try it out.

3. Train your mind to master anxious thoughts - FORGET IT

Do you have so many worries that you can't imagine fixing them all? Is there so much to be anxious about that you feel panicky, terrified or overwhelmed? All these worries churning around in your head are just bad thoughts and you can beat them with one of our longer course modules - the ABTBP (Amazing Bad-Thought-Busting Program):

When you notice a bad thought:

Step 1 - LABEL IT: Oh you're just one of those bad thoughts.

Step 2 - LEAVE IT: A bad thought needs attention, so don't give it any.

Step 3 - STAND UP TO IT: Bad thoughts are like bullies - weak underneath. You can beat them.

Step 4 - GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK: Ask yourself - "what would someone who really loved me say?" Trust them and let them help you beat the bad thought.

Step 5 - LOOK AT IT DIFFERENTLY: Give yourself the advice you'd give to a friend. Ask yourself if it will matter in six months. Pick someone you know and work out how they would handle the situation. Trust the facts, not the bad feelings.

4. Get up, it'll help you sleep

If your bad thoughts are keeping you awake at night, you can beat them by following these helpful hints:

1. Create a calm, half-hour space for yourself before bedtime. No coffee, no exercise, no eating, no alcohol. Have a warm bath and a milky drink instead.
2. Don't read in bed or watch TV. Bed is for sleep and sex, that's all.
3. When you're ready, settle down to sleep. But, if you find yourself tossing and turning with bad thoughts churning round for more than 15 minutes, get up and write down on strips of paper what's worrying you. Give each worry a day and a time when you'll focus on sorting it out. For example, you might write: Falling behind at work, Monday @ 5 p.m. on one strip of paper; and Jen's truancy, Thursday @ 1 p.m. on another. Do this until you have a number of strips of paper with worries, days and times on them. Look at all the strips of paper and promise yourself that you're going to think about each problem on the day and time you've written down but not until then. Now put them in a place that is convenient and go to bed. You have nothing on your worry schedule at the moment, so get some sleep!

How can I apply this to my life?

Write down each of these steps and decide on what day and at what time you're going to take the first one. Give yourself a pat on the back - you're at the beginning of the end of your fears!

Further Content

The Worry Box book.

Why do I feel so bad book and module.

Worksheets: Worry strips, Amazing Bad Thought Busting Programme.

Tension Control Training Resources (relaxation).

All available at www.llttf.com.