



Worries

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Worries are normal and natural, but sometimes worries can be debilitating and really impact on our ability to carry out our day to day. I like to think about worry, a little bit like a big heavy metal chain. The first link in the chain is the first worry, the next link in the chain is the next worry, and so forth. Before we know it we've got this big heavy metal chain that can make it really difficult to carry out our day to day.

We do need to worry, a little bit of worry is good for us. If we never worried about anything at all, we would never have the drive or motivation to get anything done. But too much worry isn't good for us either.

One of the tricky things with worry is that sometimes we can be worrying about something for a long time before we even realise that we're worrying. Especially if worrying is usual to us. If we're so used to worrying, sometimes when we don't have something to worry about can make us feel anxious and worried too.

Worrying is a behaviour and it is something that we can learn to change. Someone telling us to 'just not worry' about something is often the most unhelpful thing we can hear, because if we just had the power to 'not worry' then we wouldn't.

The very first step when we're thinking about controlling worry is to write your worry down. Get your worry out of your mind and down onto a piece of paper. When our worries are rattling around in our mind they have a lot of heat and a lot of power. Once these worries are down onto paper, it allows us to take an emotional step back from the worry and this alone may be enough to help us to dismiss the worry altogether. It could be helpful to keep a worry journal or a worry jar.

By writing them down can help us to see whether our worries are practical, worries that we can put a plan into place to solve or worries that we can't solve at the moment, also known as hypothetical worries. A good way to distinguish between the two is to ask yourself, can I do anything about this worry right now?

For those that we can do something about, it can be helpful to work through a problem solving technique, to help us to see the options we have in front of us, and to help us to put a plan into place to solve them.

It can also be helpful to try to manage the amount of time we spend on our worries, this is often helpful for our hypothetical worries, these worries are often future focused that usually start with 'what if'.. Setting aside a dedicated period of time each day, to focus on our worries is a technique known as worry time. This can help us to feel in control, as we will think about our worries, because these are important and they matter to us, but at a time that we're in control over, rather than our worries being in control of us. There are some great tips on the NHS every mind matters website about managing worry and the use of worry time.

Keeping a diary can be helpful too, it can be helpful to recognise our triggers and what makes things feel worse. But also what makes things feel better. When we're feeling anxious and worried we can often spend a lot of time focusing on our attention on the negatives, as we become hyper vigilant to this in line with our protective fight or flight response. It can be helpful to recognise the positives and what is going well at the moment too. There is evidence to show that practicing gratitude can reduce our feelings of anxiety. Mindfulness is another powerful tool that can help us to come back into the here and now when we're experiencing worry.

Talking our worries through with someone can also be beneficial. Even if someone isn't able to fix what we're worrying about, knowing that someone is there can provide a lot of support. If you're not able to speak to someone close to you, there are many helplines available that are there to listen, such as the Samaritans. Remember you're not alone in how you're feeling, talking to others and sharing how we're feeling is helpful. Whether this is family, friends or professional treatment and support. There are services there to help.

Try to become aware of your thoughts today, recognise if you're worrying about anything and write it down. Take a second to reflect on how you feel after you've noted it down.