





## Understanding Worrying

<b>Positive Beliefs About Worrying</b>	<b>Rethinking Beliefs About Worrying</b>
<i>Worry shows that I am a caring person.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do I know caring people who don't worry as much as I do?</li><li>• What else besides worry shows that I care?</li></ul>
<i>Worrying helps me to be prepared.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Am I confusing worrying (in my head) with actually doing something (for example, actually solving problems rather than worrying about them)?</li><li>• Do I know people who are organized and prepared who don't worry as much as I do?</li></ul>
<i>Worry motivates me.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Am I really more motivated when I worry?</li><li>• Has worrying ever actually prevented me from doing the things I want to do? (for example, worrying so much about being healthy that you actually avoid the gym?)</li></ul>
<i>Worry prevents negative outcomes.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If something bad did happen, would I really not be as upset?</li><li>• Has anything bad ever happened in my life? Did I really feel more prepared to deal with it because I worried about it?</li></ul>

### **TOOL: Paced Breathing**

1. Take a slow breath in through the nose, breathing into your lower belly so you feel it inflate like a balloon (for the count of 4)
2. Hold your breath for 1 or 2 seconds
3. Exhale slowly through the mouth so that you are pushing out the air in the "balloon" and you feel your belly suck in (for the count of 5)
4. Make sure the exhale breath is one or two counts longer than the inhale breath as this activates a greater relaxation response.
5. Wait a few seconds before taking another breath

**About 6-8 breathing cycles per minute is often helpful to decrease anxiety, but find your own comfortable breathing rhythm.**



## **TOOL: Writing a worry script**

Unlike worries about current problems, using problem-solving skills is usually not very effective in dealing with worries about hypothetical situations. For example, no amount of problem solving will help you to deal with worries about developing a serious illness later on in life.

For these types of worries, the best technique is to write a worry script every day for a week or two.

### What is a worry script?

A worry script is like a journal entry, where you write about your worry, and what you are afraid will happen. For example, if you are afraid of developing a serious illness, you might write in your worry script about how afraid you are of becoming sick, what you fear might happen, such as being in a hospital, being forgotten or abandoned by family, and missing out on all the great opportunities in life.

### What will a worry script do?

Writing a worry script will help you to experience the negative emotions associated with your fears and worries, rather than avoid them. Although this will feel uncomfortable at first, research shows us that when you face your fears in this way, your anxiety and worries will go down over time. A worry script also helps you to imagine what your feared outcome would actually look like, rather than thinking about it in “fuzzy”, “blurry”, or imprecise ways.

## **TOOL: Controlled worry time**

Pick a worry period. This is a set time, place and length of time to do all your worrying. Try to keep your worry period the same everyday (e.g. 6.00 p.m. dining room, 15 minutes). Preferably this will not be the hour or two before bedtime.

When you notice yourself worrying about something during the day, list your worries briefly (in a couple of words only).

Make the decision not to worry about it then and there, but save the worry for your set worry period. Bring your attention back to the present and what it was you were doing, reassuring yourself that you will deal with your worries later.

When the time arrives, allow yourself to worry for 15 minutes. Only spend the time worrying if you still feel it is necessary to worry. If the problem doesn't seem important anymore, you needn't spend time worrying about it.



## Dealing with Unhelpful Thoughts

- Have I had any experiences that show me that this thought is not completely true all the time?
- If a friend had this thought, what would I tell them?
- If a friend was thinking this thought, what would they say to me? What evidence would they point out to me that would suggest that my thoughts were not 100% true?
- When I am not feeling this way, do I think about this type of situation any differently? How?
- When I have felt this way in the past, what did I think about that helped me feel better?
- Have I been in this type of situation before? What happened? Is there anything different between this situation and previous ones? What have I learned from prior experiences that could help me now?
- Are there any small things that contradict my thoughts that I might be discounting as not important?
- Five years from now, if I look back at this situation, will I look at it differently? Will I focus on any different parts of my experience?
- Are there any strengths or positives in me or the situation that I am ignoring?
- Am I jumping to any conclusions in columns 2 and 4 of the thought record that are not completely justified by the evidence?
- Am I blaming myself for something over which I do not have complete control?



## **Challenging Your Positive Beliefs About Worry**

- Do I have any evidence for my belief? If so, is it possible that there might be an alternative explanation?
- Do I have any evidence against my belief?
- Can I think of any times in my life when I did not worry and events turned out positively?
- Does worrying really prevent bad things from happening? Or make good things more likely? Or will good and bad things just happen regardless of whether I worry?
- Does worry really help me cope, or does it interfere with my coping?
- Would I be able to handle a bad situation if I had not worried beforehand?
- When I am worrying, am I really problem-solving? Or am I just going over the same thoughts over and over again without coming up with a solution?
- What are the real effects of worrying – how is it affecting my life?
- How often does my worry really reflect reality? How often do I over predict the likelihood of something going wrong?
- How often is my worrying really “worth it”?
- If I stopped worrying, would it really mean I didn’t care?