

Managing Worry

Many hours a day can be spent worrying and constant worry about anything and everything is unhelpful to us, it can cause anxiety and distress. Worries can be separated into two categories;

Hypothetical Situations

And

Current Problems.

Hypothetical Situations

These types of worries are based on 'What if...?' This type of worry occurs because we overestimate the possibility of something terrible happening and we then tend to imagine a future 'worst case' scenario that might possibly not occur. An example of unhelpful thinking could be - Being stuck in a traffic jam whilst on the way to work and worrying that you could lose your job as a result. Perhaps there is little or nothing much we can do about a situation, yet this type of worrying can cause a lot of anxiety and distress.

Current Problems

These types of worries relate to a real situation that we can possibly do something about. We then need to address the worry in a helpful way, rather than continually worrying about it.

We can decide what to do about the worry, along with when and how to do it.

Managing Worry

We can learn how to act differently to manage a worry. The aim is to learn 'control how you deal with worry'. When you feel yourself worrying, if it is not something you can do something about immediately, you will want to be able to think about it later instead. Setting regular 'worry free zones' or 'setting a zone dedicated to dealing with a worry' can be helpful ways of controlling worry.

Worry Free Zones

You may already have these zones, so identify when these are; is there a certain time of day? A certain place? Whilst doing certain activities? If you can already identify these existing zones, build on them so they become established 'worry free zones'. If you cannot identify an existing 'worry free zone' then create one yourself, using the list above as a guide. Keep these zones worry free. In the 'worry free zone' if worry comes to mind, acknowledge the worry away and say, 'I don't need to worry about this now, this is my worry free zone'. Another task similar, but in reverse to the previous task, is 'dedicated time to worry'.

Dedicated Time to Worry

When you feel yourself worrying and you cannot do something to solve the situation right away. Creating zones 'dedicated to worry' may help. Using the same guidance as the 'worry free zone' task, if a worry occurs in the day, tell yourself, 'I don't need to worry about this right now, I will attend to it later'.

Then return your attention to whatever it was you were doing. You can also create a 'worry book' when the worry occurs and you do not want to deal with it right away, write the worry down in this book for later. Setting these 'zones' helps you learn not to react to worrying thoughts and helps you eventually take control over the urge to worry.

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Change your Focus of Attention

N – Notice, right NOW, focus your attention

O – Observe and notice whatever you are doing, for example walking

W – Wise Mind – 'where shall I focus my attention now?'

Changing the focus of your attention may help with stepping away from the worry, using the N O W task. Choose an activity to focus on for one, two or five minutes, examples are;

Drinking a cup of tea – Notice taste and temperature of the tea

Having a walk – Notice the sensations and sounds as you walk

Having a shower – Notice the smells and sounds as you shower.

Whatever you chose to do, focus on it and be in that 'right now' moment. Observe and notice what you are doing; see, hear, smell, touch, feel, breathe. Whenever other thoughts come into your mind at this time, return your focus to your chosen activity. Be patient with yourself during this time and rather than judging

about whether something is good or bad or pleasant or unpleasant, describe the task to yourself instead.