

Techniques for Managing Worries

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- 1) **Worry Only On Paper:** Get a notebook or journal. Whenever you find yourself worrying, write out your thoughts. If you don't have time to write, tell yourself that you'll need to wait until you can worry on paper. In the meantime, try to refocus your attention on the task at hand.
- 2) **Schedule Worry Time:** Once or twice a day (or more if you are very stressed) set aside a period of time (20 or 30 minutes) to dedicate yourself to worrying. Write out all of the things that are concerning you. During worry time, do the following:
 - a. **Address the Worry:** Whenever possible, take action! Make a plan for how you will address the worry, with concrete steps for how you will achieve it. If you aren't sure how to address it, make a plan for how you will learn how to address this worry.
 - i. *Example: What if I fail that test? I don't want that to happen so I can plan to reread the chapters and type my notes. I can go to the review session and ask the professor questions about parts I'm unsure about.*
 - b. **Say "So What?"** Most worries begin with the phrase "What if..." To counteract worries, rephrase your worry to begin with "So what.." Making a plan for handling your worst case scenario can help you calm down enough so that you don't let you worry get in the way of success.
 - i. *For example, "What if I don't get that job?" would become "So what if I don't get that job? I guess I can work on my resume, do more networking and improve my qualifications."*
 - c. **Assess the Probability:** Many of our worries are unlikely to occur. Ask yourself, how likely is the worst-case scenario?
 - i. *For example, if you are worried that your plane will crash, you could remind yourself that you have a more than 99.9% chance of surviving your flight.*
 - d. **Replace the Worry with a More Realistic Thought:** By definition, worries are a distorted version of the future. Try to focus on a more realistic version of the future, which may be somewhere in between your ideal scenario and the worst-case scenario.
 - i. *Imagine that your worry is "What if I don't find a job?" Try thinking instead "It may be a challenging job market but I know that with hard work, and determination, I will find a job. It may not be my dream job, at first, but I can keep working until I find one that is. I have many skills and resources to draw from."*