



# Understanding worry.

Why do we worry? Is it possible to stop worrying? Worrying is often a fear of uncertainty and the things we worry about don't usually come true. Most of our fears are perceived rather than real threats, but it still doesn't stop us from worrying.



## About worry.

Worries are unpleasant thoughts that we can't get out of our head. Many of us worry from time to time, and we all worry about the same sorts of things.

The feeling of worry can be normal or even helpful sometimes e.g. worrying about an exam may help you to study more.

Worry becomes a problem when we're feeling 'worried all the time', and when our worries get in the way of other parts of our life, or if they make us unhappy.

## What do you worry about?

Sometimes, there are real reasons to worry such as job insecurity, financial difficulties and ill health. But there are times that we worry for no rational reason.

There are two types of worry; practical worries that we can do something about and act on. These types of worries are often about a current situation.

Hypothetical worries that we can't do anything about. These types of worries are about things that may happen in the future and often starts with "What if..."

- What if I lose my job?
- What if I can't pay the mortgage?
- What if I get sick?
- What if we don't get there on time?
- What if something awful happens to a loved one?
- What if I feel nervous in my job interview?
- What if my face goes red?

Next time you find yourself thinking "What if", ask yourself if there's anything that you can do to control the situation. If there isn't, then let the worry go.

## Symptoms of worry.

Worry can affect the way you feel, think and behave.

Physical symptoms can include:

- Sweating
- Problems sleeping
- Feeling of pins and needles
- Irritability

- Headaches
- Tiredness
- Disturbed sleep

Behavioural symptoms can include:

- Worry
- Seeking reassurance from family, friends and colleagues
- Putting things off
- Isolating yourself

"Worry is something that many people experience. It's not the same as thinking. Thinking leads to solutions. Worrying leads nowhere. Thinking leads to action. Worrying leads to nothing. Thinking leads to relief. Excessive worrying leads only to powerlessness, tiredness and exhaustion."  
(Professor Ad Kerkhof, author of Stop Worrying).

## When should you seek help?

Worry becomes a problem when it's very frequent and it becomes difficult to control or disengage from. We can become trapped in our own thoughts and this can lead to feelings of anxiety. Excessive worrying can affect both your physical and mental health, as well as your daily life. It may interfere with your appetite, sleep, relationships and job performance. If you think you worry too much, then it's time to seek help from your GP.

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Worrying won't stop the bad things from happening. It just stops you from enjoying the good.