

Stop Worrying Start Living

7 Practical Tips To Overcome Worries



In this article let me share with you 7 practical tips to overcome worries. I strongly believe these tips will help you better cope with anxiety. Feel free to use the self-help worksheets I've made available below.

Worrying is a topic I am particularly interested in for several reasons, first, I used to be worried about a lot of insignificant events and secondly I know how destructive worry can be to your health. I believe that the main reason why my father had a heart attack ten

years ago was actually because of stress (thankfully he is fine now). He wasn't fat, wasn't smoking, was exercising on a regular basis and wasn't drinking alcohol more than the average person but had a strong tendency to worry. Of course, genetics probably played a role too.

Just as I am writing this article I remember a story he told me about a doctor who seemed to imply that he was responsible for this situation. At that time I thought the doctor was being pretty unfair to him; he was taking care of his health pretty well and after all it wasn't his fault if he had a stressful job, right? But think about it for a while. How do you define a stressful situation? What is stress? Do you not have some control over it?

Stress is only the result of your interpretation of an event and does not exist by itself, which means that you are responsible for your stress. A situation is not

stressful in itself. Does it mean you can totally get rid of stress? Probably not. However you can reduce significantly your stress and your worries by having a better understanding of what stress is.

1. Being Fully Aware that You Are Worrying

When we deal with our emotions, the first thing to do is to accept them completely. The common belief is that we should not repress our emotions. We should let off the steam. However, the reality is that, yelling at someone, pounding a punching ball or venting to your friend, rather than helping you, will only exacerbate your anger. **The more you experience an emotion, the more you reinforce the connections associated with that emotion in your brain.** Actually, accepting your emotions doesn't mean you have to let off the steam. What you have to do is to become aware of your emotions, act as an external observer trying to analyze what is going on and accept it. "Okay, so now I have a feeling of anger. It's okay. Why do I feel that way? What was the root cause, Can I let go of that emotion now?" To learn more about how to let go of your emotions I highly recommend that you read *The Sedona Method* by Hale Dwoskin.

2. Detach Yourself from Your Emotions and Empower Yourself

We usually say « I am angry », « I am worried », or « I am depressed » but you should realize that you are not your emotions. By changing the words you are using when you talk to yourself you can detach yourself from your emotions and empower yourself. After realizing you are worrying, instead of saying « I'm worried » you could say for instance something like « Okay, so I choose to think in a certain way that causes me to experience a feeling that I would label as « worry » ». By refusing to use « I am » you will stop associating yourself with your negative emotions and stop making them part of your identity. As a result, you will feel more empowered, will be able to analyze more objectively your emotions and to better cope with those emotions.

3. Worries Are Useless

By increasing our level of awareness you will understand and accept that worries are useless. You might say: "wait a minute Thibaut! Stress helps me take action and perform better. If stress exists it is for a reason right?" Well. Some people like Denis Waitley in his book [The Psychology of Winning](#) argue that stress is necessary and help us perform better but I believe they are talking more about stress before a performance. Feeling a certain amount of stress before a big event is a normal thing but worrying about something a week before it will happen or about a thing that might never happen is a waste of time and energy. I'm sure stress was necessary for our survival thousand of years ago when we were half-naked in the jungle surrounded by all kinds of dangers but nowadays a great majority of situations are not a matter of life or death anymore. Most of our negative thoughts are thus useless in our modern society. One of the problems is that we believe worrying is necessary. We subconsciously believe that by worrying we are doing something to solve the problem. Worrying has never solved any problems. Worrying like any other emotions is only a signal telling you to wake up and take some actions. **I will repeat myself because it is very important that you understand that worrying is useless. It is not helping you in anyway and it might seriously be negatively affecting your health.**

Take a minute to consider this, when in your past has worrying seriously helped you in any way? Can you think of any such situations? How many times did you worry over something that never even came to fruition?

4. Sort out Your Worries

Make sure the things you are worrying about are really legitimate.

Let me quote Earl Nightingale, a famous American motivational speaker to illustrate my point:

« Let me show you how much time we waste in worrying about the wrong problems. Here is a reliable estimate of things people worry about: Things that never happen 40%, things that are over and past and that can never be changed by all the worry in the world 30%, needless worries about our health 12%, petty miscellaneous worries 10%, really, legitimate worries 8%. **In short, 92% of the average person worries take a valuable time, cause painful stress even mental anguish, and are absolutely unnecessary.** »

Similarly, the Stoics emphasized the need to sort out things depending on whether you have total control, some control, or no control at all over them.

Things you have total control over include the goals you are setting for yourself. Things you have some control over include the outcome of an event such as a tennis game. Things you have no control over are things like the weather, the economy, the politics, the past and so on.

For every ailment under the sun,

There is a remedy, or there is none;

If there be one, try to find it

If there be none, never mind it.

Mother Goose

5. Live in Day-Tight Compartments

This idea comes from the book by Dale Carnegie: *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, an awesome book that I highly recommend that you read it. The idea is pretty simple yet powerful. **Best ideas are often the simple ones but the key is to practice.** Small anecdote: when I ordered a copy of this book for my father and asked him if he read it he said he did. I said to him it is not a novel, you shouldn't read it only one; you should read it again and again, and **practice**. He probably didn't :)

Living in day-tight compartments means we should do one thing at a time with the best of our abilities, one day at a time. As far as I know we cannot change the past and we cannot predict the future. It is a very simple idea but it is very easy to forget!

Live in the present and think as if today was the only thing you have. Personally, I try to plan my day as much as I can and to be clear on what I want to accomplish this week, this month and this year. When we have clear plans for our future we don't need to worry that much about the future anymore. We only need to review our plans from time to time. Then, what I do is that I delegate tomorrow's tasks to my future me and trust he would get the job done. By doing that, I can better focus on the present.

When you are worrying there are in reality only a few actions you can take:

- Keep worrying without doing anything (the worse)
- Ask yourself if you have control or not over the things you are worrying about
- If you have some control, either take action now whenever possible, or plan actions you will take later and forget about it for the time being.
- If you have no control just forget about it

6. What Is the Worse Case Scenario

Once you have identified what are your legitimate worries ask yourself the following question: what is the worst thing that can possibly happen? And prepare yourself mentally until you accept it. Then, starting from that, try to do what you can to solve the problem. Preparing yourself mentally will generate a sort of relief since once you have accepted the worse case scenario you cannot worry any more than that.

7. Understand How Happiness Works

Though the ultimate goal of each person on this planet is to be happy, it is surprising to see how few people actually study happiness and understand it. **By understanding how happiness works it is possible to significantly reduce worry, but for that a conscious effort is required.** It is a constant theme of my blog, unless we are willing to open our mind to new ideas, challenge our existing

beliefs, and practice consciously, we will never change. **Personal development is about increasing awareness.**

Our mind is constantly tricking us, making us believe that if we fail to land that job we strive, date that girl we are dreaming of, or buy that house we really want, we will be miserable. This is bullshit! In that regard, a famous study on lottery winners and paraplegics was very eye-opening for me. This study conducted in 1978 aimed at evaluating the impact on happiness of the following events: winning the lottery or becoming a paraplegic. The results showed that one year after the event, both groups were as happy as they were before the events. Wow! How cool is that? Take a few minutes to really think about it. After pondering about it, I felt a kind of relief realizing that even if I were to experience terrible accidents it wouldn't really affect my level of happiness. I think there is a general misconception about happiness.

Indeed, we all have a predetermined level of happiness. Some people are naturally happier than others. Fortunately, it can be changed. According to Sonja Lyubomirsky (check her great book: [*The How of Happiness: A New Approach to Getting the Life You Want*](#)) 50% of our happiness is determined by genetics, 40% by internal factors and only 10% by external factors! (Such as whether we are married or single, rich or poor, smart or stupid...). It means that, as you might already know, it is impossible to increase significantly our happiness by focusing on external factors such as money, need for approval, fame and so on. **It might take time and effort to fully realize it but the more we become aware of how happiness works and how our brain wonderfully adapts to any situation, the more we can release the pressure we are putting on ourselves, and get rid of worries about our future.** It gives us more room to focus on doing what we can in the present to improve our situation.

Practical Exercises:

- Take a pen and a piece of paper. Write down the biggest thing that you are currently worrying about
- Sort out your worry: can be changed/cannot be changed/can be changed to a certain extent.
- Delegate the task to the future you. Imagine your future you completing the task successfully and trust him. If you are the kind of person who worries about petty things like I used to be, just realize that the fact you are reading this article now means that you found a way to survive so far no matter how many problems you went through. I always tell myself "It's okay, my future me will handle the problem perfectly as he always does and always did in the past". This exercise helps alleviate my worries about the future.

Download and fill in the [How-to-Stop-Worrying-worksheet](#)

What about you? Do you worry often? What do you do to alleviate your worries? Leave a comment below and let me know what kind of techniques you are using. I'm curious to now

See also: [Is Meditation for Everyone?](#)