



10 Steps to Beating Worry

1. Keep a journal or log of your worries for a week or two. This helps in at least two ways: Increased awareness of worry tends to help some people worry a bit less. Additionally, writing down your worries helps you to work on evaluating whether they are more or less realistic (see #2 below).

2. Remember that thoughts are rarely 100% factual; they range on a continuum from very inaccurate to very accurate. If your worries are accurate, you need to problem solve. Even when worries are accurate, they can snowball out of control (and they especially snowball when they are less accurate). It helps to put your thoughts in perspective. See our Realistic Thinking Tip Sheet for specific ways to work on this.

3. Many people who worry believe that there is value to worry: That it prevents bad things from happening, for example. This is rarely true.

4. Relaxation strategies (deep breathing, muscle relaxation) can help if you have a lot of muscle tension when you worry. See our Relaxation Strategies Tip Sheet for specific strategies.

5. Thinking about your worries in a mindful way can help. In a nutshell, this involves trying to be an objective observer of your worry, and existing in the present moment (see our Mindfulness Tip Sheet for specific strategies).

6. Schedule time to worry. Set aside time each day to worry; during this time, write down your worries (don't just think about them). A student of mine had an excellent explanation for why this works: Think about the last time you visited a buffet, and ate too much. Did you have much desire to eat afterward? Probably not. Gorging yourself tends to make eating the last thing you want to do. Making yourself worry during "worry time" works in a similar way: Your brain gorges itself on worry, and becomes tired of thinking about it. Of course, doing this just once won't help in the long run, but regular, daily practice will. For the rest of the day, defer your worrying to your "worry time". If you worry at night, write it down briefly and remember that you will worry about it tomorrow.

7. Work on assertiveness. Most of us aren't as assertive as we could be, and this tends to be particularly true of many worriers as well. See our Assertiveness Tip Sheet for specific strategies.

8. Face your fears. Most people who have any kind of anxiety understandably avoid whatever triggers their anxiety, and this is true of worry as well. Worriers tend to procrastinate on tasks that they worry about. Some worriers do the opposite, and spend too much time checking on things they worry about. Regardless, facing your fears helps.

9. Work on time management. Make of list of tasks that are critical, not so critical, and very unimportant. Focus on the critical tasks first. Delegate as needed.

10. Remember lifestyle factors. Many worriers are helped by regular exercise, nutritional eating, and reducing caffeine. And of course, antidepressant medications can also help with worry.