



Overcoming Worry

by Hal Baumchen, PsyD, LP, LADC

NORTHSTAR COMPASS

*Navigating
Toward Better
Emotional
Health*



*This publication is provided
by NorthStar Regional.
All content copyright ©
Dr. Hal Baumchen.*



Move Forward in Hope
northstarregional.com

Chanhasen • Chaska
Maple Grove • Shakopee

WHAT'S YOUR WORRY?

Worry is the mental habit of continually repeating and thinking about future concerns. Most people worry occasionally and could name common situations or problems causing concern. These difficulties may include marriage problems, safety of family members, what others might think of them, financial pressures, weather, health, and job-related stress. Worry becomes a problem as it creeps deeper into life, occupies more time, and makes concerns seem bigger than they actually are.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF ANXIETY

Scores of people suffer from unrelenting anxiety-related problems: difficulty sleeping, stomach trouble, and generalized stress. They worry themselves into an early grave or fret away their life, perhaps seeking diversion through alcohol, drugs, or shopping. The anxiety-related disorders people suffer from today include *worry anxiety*, excessively thinking about imagined or unlikely fears, expecting the worst, and bracing for an imagined catastrophe.

Worry will ruin your life! It will age your face, gray your hair, ulcer your stomach and sour your whole outlook on life. It is a bitter acid that drips and drips until it eats away your life from the inside out. Pastor Leith Anderson

THE ANXIETY PICTURE OF TODAY

Common anxiety-related disorders today include:

Worry: excessively thinking about imagined or unlikely fears, expecting the worst and bracing for imagined catastrophe.

Fear: anxiety over real fears, threats, or demands; being overly concerned about a particular happening that may only have some basis in reality.

Existential anxiety: being anxious over a lack of purpose, awareness of the inevitability of death, leading to concern to live a meaningful life.

Panic anxiety: a chemical imbalance in the brain due to the lack of natural tranquilizers, causing all systems to become hyperactive and easily panicked; can lead to agoraphobia.

Phobic anxiety: exaggerated and persistent fears, avoiding certain places, people, or projects.

Generalized anxiety: unfocused and generalized anxiety that becomes free-floating, often changing the object of concern.

Separation anxiety: originating in an

insecure childhood, this anxiety arises when a person is cut off from home or loved ones.

PROGRESSING WORRY

Worry is not stagnant. It may start in small ways and build momentum over time. Many worries may begin as concerns, build in magnitude, and interrupt life more and more.

CONSIDER THIS PROGRESSION:

A situation or circumstance comes to your attention.



Your analysis of the trouble is characterized by negative thoughts and distorted beliefs.



Your initial conclusion or speculation causes you to feel out of control.



You begin to feel anxious; concentration on ordinary activities decreases.



REDUCING WORRY

1. Rehearse the positive—review what went right
2. Speak what you know, not what you don't
3. Reduce your load of responsibilities
4. When you are tempted to worry, find mental distractions
5. Find alternative actions
6. Limit your worry time
7. Change your self-talk
8. Hang out with positive people

LEARNING TO WORRY LESS

In controlling anxiety, it is helpful to make a distinction between problems you can prevent, fix, or bypass, and those you cannot. Learn to accept things outside your ability to control. When you are tempted to worry you might try a diversion or a distraction to interrupt the relentless pounding of anxious thinking. Consider talking to a friend, taking a walk, working on a hobby, exercising, reading a book, or listening to music. Use counseling or self-help books to further generate healthy distractions.

Being able to sleep peacefully is a necessity often beyond understanding for

the worrier. Anxious thoughts intrude as they lie in bed, and every solution generated brings three more problems to worry about. At night, simply try some of the following techniques. Do not permit yourself to worry in bed. Redirect your thoughts or make yourself get up. Don't give in to this destructive bedtime pattern. Reduce negative thoughts before bedtime by not watching the news, arguing with family members or balancing the checkbook before you retire for the evening

FREQUENCY OF SYMPTOMS IN ANXIETY

| <u>Symptom</u> | <u>Frequency (%)</u> |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Difficulty concentrating | 86.2 |
| Fear of losing control | 75.9 |
| Fear of being rejected | 72.4 |
| Unable to control thinking | 72.4 |
| Confusion | 69.0 |
| Sentences broken or disconnected | 44.8 |
| Fear of being attacked | 34.5 |
| Fear of dying | 34.5 |
| Trembling hands | 31.0 |
| Stuttering | 24.1 |

TAKE CONTROL

- Remember, worry does not change anything. Some things cannot be controlled and only constructive action can bring results.
- Reduce your overall stress level. Consider areas in life that could be downsized or eliminated.
- Be in tune with yourself. Know when you are beginning to feel anxious and have strategies practiced and ready to avoid excessive anxiety.
- Get it out. Talk to friends, family, or find someone who is a good listener.
- Create comfort zones. To keep stress from building, set scheduled times to unwind. A comfort zone is a place to escape and unwind, perhaps a corner of the living room or favorite park.

THE WORRIER'S CHECKLIST

The worrier:

- Assumes things will turn out badly
- Looks for what could go wrong
- Is distracted from the present by concern for the future
- Replays unfavorable and negative scenarios
- Is often upset and filled with mental anguish
- Is overly concerned with things that aren't right
- Afraid things will get worse
- Worries about what others will think
- Inconsolable regarding his or her concern
- Preoccupied with safety or health
- Watches with twisted anticipation for even small signs of trouble
- Rehearses potential failures, rejection, comments, or disapproval from others



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hal Baumchen, PsyD, LP, LADC is the President and Clinical Director of NorthStar Regional. He is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist (LP) and a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC) with over 30 years of counseling experience.

He received his Master's Degree from Wheaton Graduate School, his Doctorate of Psychology (PsyD) from the Illinois School of Professional Psychology, and his Certificate in Co-Occurring Disorders from Adler Graduate School. He serves frequently as a seminar leader, and has taught workshops in the USA, Canada, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and India.

He is the author of *Journeys* and *Destinations*, two books on co-occurring disorders treatment, and the co-author of *Finding Hope Again: Overcoming Depression* with Dr. Neil T. Anderson.

This information in this publication is not intended as a substitute for professional help or to be used as a diagnostic tool. If you have serious difficulties with anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues, please seek professional help.