

# Worry



## What is worry?

Worrying is something that all of us do, every day – children, young people and adults. It is a normal part of life.

Worry tends to be a whole lot of thoughts that come one after another, about events in the future or in the past. Quite often worry thoughts start with things like “if only I had...” or “I must remember to...” or “what if...” an example might be the thought “What if I have left the front door unlocked? A burglar might break in! then all my things might be stolen... and then I’d have to go to the police... it would be terrible!...”

Sometimes worrying can help us, by making us do things like checking that we have locked the front door. But sometimes worrying can become a real problem. If you answer “yes” to the following questions, then worrying might be a problem for you.



Do you spend a lot of your time worrying?



Does worrying get you really upset and anxious?



Does worrying stop you getting a good sleep at night?



Does worrying stop you enjoying yourself and getting on with things during the day, at school or at work?



Do you feel that your worrying is “out of control” or that once you start you just can’t stop?



Do you feel worrying has affected your health (for example given you stomach aches, headaches, or diarrhoea)?

## ‘What It Is’ and ‘How to Help Beat It’

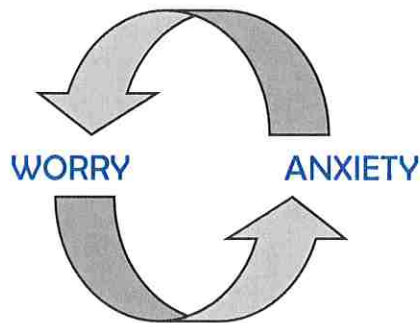
### What too much worrying does

Worrying about things can make you anxious. Anxiety is easy to notice if you are on the look-out for it, although many people suffer from anxiety without realizing what it is. When you are anxious you may notice things like:-

- Heart rate speeding up, sweaty skin or going pale
- Feeling upset, on edge, angry, or irritable
- Feeling that something terrible is about to happen
- Throat or mouth dry
- Muscle aches or headaches
- Feeling tired, having little energy
- Poor digestion – stomach aches, bowel problems
- Concentration problems, mind racing, can’t sleep

Anxiety can make it more difficult to concentrate on work, to remember things, to get on with enjoying life. If you have a physical health condition or illness, it can also make this more difficult to cope with and even directly affect your health.

The more anxious you get, the more you worry and the more you worry, the more anxious you become! It can be a vicious circle.



But there are ways of helping to beat worry, reduce anxiety and feel more relaxed!

### How to beat worry

Here are some helpful tips on how to make worry less of a problem and how to make anxiety less. Some worrying and anxiety are a normal part of life, so they won't go away all together – but they shouldn't have to take over your life.

#### Tip 1 – Notice

Notice when you are worrying or feeling anxious! This is the first step in making things better. If you feel the signs of anxiety mentioned earlier, or you notice you are thinking thoughts like those listed earlier, then take note of these.

#### Tip 2 – “Stop”!

When you notice you are worrying, say to yourself “stop”! and see if you can get your brain into doing something else. Try thinking of something else (especially something nice, relaxing, or enjoyable). Try doing something to keep your brain occupied (like reading, watching TV, doing a hobby, or playing a sport).



### Tip 3 – Worry Time

Think about your day and find a time in it when it would be okay to worry – no more than five or ten minutes is needed. This is your special “worry time”.

When you find yourself worrying at a time when you have other things to do (like at bedtime, or while you are trying to concentrate on something else), tell yourself to stop and put off the worries for later, at your worry time.



### Tip 4 – Self-talk

If you find yourself worrying about the same thing over and over (for example, “I’ll start my new school and no one will like me”) then write down for yourself the opposite, “positive” thought (for example, “People will like me. I’m a nice person”). Then every time you notice yourself worrying the first thought, tell yourself the positive thought. You can even write it down on a small card and carry it with you, in your pocket, to remind yourself of it.

### Tip 5 – Problem Solving

This is something you can try by yourself, or with another person. Remember – a problem shared is a problem halved! If you can tell someone else that you trust what your problem is, they can often help you with solving it, or coping with it.



#### Step 1

If you find yourself worrying about a problem you are facing, write down what that problem is. Be specific – write down exactly what the problem is, so “I’m worried I won’t cope” isn’t specific, while “I’m worried that I will forget people’s names when I go to my new school” is specific.

## Step 2

Then, brainstorm all the possible ways you can think of to sort this problem out – even the most silly-sounding ones! Write them all down as you think of them.



## Step 3

Once you have a list of possible solutions, go through them one at a time. Write down the pros (what is good about that solution) and the cons (what is bad about that solution). Think about the consequences of each solution (“what will happen if I do that?”).

## Step 4

When you have all the pros and cons, decide which solution you will choose. If you can, check with someone else you trust whether they think this is a good solution. Then go and do it!

## Step 5

Once you have done what you have decided, take a new look at the problem. Is it sorted out? Has it changed? Is it still there? Go back to step 1 and problem-solve again if you need to.

## Tip 6 – Relaxation

Relaxation can be a really helpful way of making worrying less of a problem, and reducing anxiety.



There is a separate information booklet which explains what relaxation is and different ways of getting relaxed. But here are some simple relaxation tips:

### 1. Take time out



Get away from the things that are worrying or upsetting you – even if it's just for a minute. Go somewhere quiet (even the bathroom!), or just look out of a window for a bit.

2. **Breathing.** Spend a minute thinking about breathing. Breathe in and out regularly and not too deeply or too little. Sometimes it can help to count in your head while you breathe (for example, breathe in for three and then out for three).
3. **Relax your muscles.** Stretch out your muscles and then let them go floppy and relaxed. This is easier if you have somewhere comfortable to sit. Make sure you include all your muscles, even your face, forehead, back and stomach.