

Six Strategies to Reduce Your Worry

Everyone worries about things sometimes. But people with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) experience an exaggerated degree of worry to the point that it can become debilitating.

Why We Worry

Worrying is a cognitive symptom of experiencing anxiety. Anxiety, at a moderate level, can be helpful, motivating a person to take something seriously, to solve a problem, to consider implications of his or her actions, or to search for reassurance. But sometimes a person can become stuck in a worrying state. The following strategies will hopefully help you meet some of these goals.

1. Make a Plan

One thing people often worry about is unforeseen circumstances. Sometimes there are things happening in our lives that are out of our control, such as getting hired for a job. One way to cope with situations like these is to make plans for different possible outcomes. Make a plan as detailed as you need to determine your course of action if you do or do not get the job, which hopefully will take away some of the worry.

2. Rehearse

Another thing people often worry about is performances and presentations in front of peers. For school, jobs, and our social lives, we frequently have to make presentations, speak publicly, or talk to friends about something difficult. One way to reduce worry in these situations is to rehearse exactly what you are going to say and do as many times as you need to feel comfortable.

3. Attend to Your Physical Health

When our bodies are in optimal health, we also have more mental resources available to cope with stress, solve problems, and control our worrying. Achieve optimal physical health by eating a healthier diet, sleeping more, and being more physically active. It can have dramatic effects on your mood and your ability to cope.

4. Discover the Real Source

Sometimes a person worries about things that are a distraction from the things that are really bothering him or her. For example, worrying about an outfit to wear the next day, which provides a distraction from worrying about what is really bothering them, like a quarrel with a loved one. Being able to trace the real source of your anxiety and worry can help us regain control of the situation and take steps to improve what is really troubling us.

5. Put It in the Proper Context

A hallmark sign of GAD is magnifying and worrying about small things, making them more important than they really are. Taking a step back to put your worries into their proper context can be a quick way to reduce their intensity.

6. Break Your Worries Down

Worrying tends to make us build a giant mountain of fear and anxiety in our minds, and eventually we lose sight of what is actually part of the mountain. Taking some time to break down and list the things that are troubling you is a great way to get a handle on things, and allows you to make several smaller plans of action, rather than being crippled by having to climb a mountain.