

# EMBRACE HEALTHY THOUGHTS

## How to Manage Your Worries



It's important to distinguish between *thinking* and *worrying*. Thinking is a good thing that involves reflection and can help us analyze situations in our lives and lead to greater clarity and action when it's necessary. On the other hand, worrying often causes anxiety and tends to lean towards negativity and catastrophizing. It is a means of dealing with uncertainty and can be an attempt at problem-solving. In comparison to thinking, however, worrying feels more repetitive and unproductive. Many chronic worriers believe that they can't control their thoughts, but you can learn to control when and how often you worry. It simply takes some practice!



### Schedule in Worry Time

Because our days get busy, scheduling can help us manage all responsibilities, deadlines, and appointments we have. Next time you're looking at your calendar, set aside some worry time!

01

Schedule your worry time in advance. In your calendar, set aside 15 to 30 minutes every day for one week. It doesn't have to be at the same time each day – though that can help in establishing a routine - but avoid having worry time in the evening and especially before bed. Instead, choose a time in the morning or afternoon.

02

Spend worry time alone and during this window, write down all of the worries that come to mind. Do not worry about trying to problem solve or come up with solutions to what you're worried about. You can jot down ideas that come to mind but do not feel pressured to do so.

03

Between scheduled worry time, do your best not to worry outside of your designated time. This will be difficult at first and you will need to remind yourself, but your intention and effort will make a difference. Keep worries in a journal or container and remind yourself that they are safely stored, so you don't need to think about them right now.

04

At the end of the week, spend a few minutes reviewing what you've written during your worry time. Look for patterns or repeat worries. Notice any changes in your worries. Are some no longer relevant? This information can provide insight that can help you manage your mental well-being and perhaps identify changes you can make to alleviate your common worries.

05

After the first week, consider repeating the exercise for another week. Over time, you may find you can schedule worry time every other day or just at the beginning of the week. With practice, you'll notice you're able to control when and where you worry, thereby strengthening your ability to manage and guide your thoughts.

# WHY DOES IT WORK?

Let's agree... it sounds strange and counterintuitive to officially schedule time to worry. Isn't the goal NOT to worry? Chances are we will never be able to entirely avoid worrying, so this is a way to do it more effectively. Scheduled worry time is a cognitive-behavioural therapy technique that can help us do that.

## WORRY AWARENESS.

Mindfulness is a big part of the process. Rather than letting our worrying thoughts take over and leave us feeling stressed and anxious, we begin to intentionally notice these thoughts and try to accept that we are, in fact, worrying.

## WORRY DELAY.

Scheduling worry time allows us to practice and develop the ability to delay our worries so they don't interfere with other aspects of our life. When worries arise, we want to acknowledge the thoughts, but place them "on hold" to be dealt with later.

## WORRY MANAGEMENT.

Scheduled worry time provides an opportunity to re-engage with the thoughts we've delayed and attempt to work through them *constructively*. How do we do that?



## HOW TO WORRY CONSTRUCTIVELY

- 1 During worry time, look at the thoughts you've written down. Are some no longer relevant? Perhaps they've been resolved or they no longer bother you. Cross them off your list!
- 2 Review your worries again and circle those worries that you can control or have some influence over – whether by taking action or changing your mindset about the situation.
- 3 Focus on the items you've circled. Write each down and brainstorm five solutions to the situation. Maybe you can ask someone for help, or have a conversation with someone who can provide some insight. Think creatively!

## DON'T FORGET ABOUT DREAM TIME!

Balance worry time by scheduling some time for dreaming. When you make a point to think about what you want in life, your brain begins to look for ways to make them happen. Dream time can be a great afternoon pick-me-up and a productive precursor to goal-setting!



**Sources** [healthypsych.com/psychology-tools-schedule-worry-time/](http://healthypsych.com/psychology-tools-schedule-worry-time/)  
[psychcentral.com/blog/how-to-worry-more-effectively#1](http://psychcentral.com/blog/how-to-worry-more-effectively#1)  
 Images from Freepik.com