

WORRY NOT

HOW TO BREAK FREE FROM WORRY



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Table of Contents

Introduction

3

Health Issues Associated With Worrying

4

Signs That You Worry Too Much

6

Common Causes of Worry

8

Worrying Doesn’t Work

11

Coping Strategies for Worrying

12

What To Do When Worry Strikes

15

Conclusion

17

Some Bible Verses That Address Worry and Anxiety

18

Introduction



Worrying is a normal human response to uncertainty. We worry when we don’t know what’s happening, how to respond, or the outcome. Worrying is a waste of imagination, yet everyone is familiar with it. The old saying: “Worry is like a rocking chair, it gives you something to do, but it doesn’t get you anywhere” is so appropriate and true. In response to the stress of our regular lives, which at times might be overwhelming, many of us hop into the chair and begin to rock: “What if I don’t get the job?, What if they don’t like me?, What if people find out about my weaknesses?”

We primarily worry about the future and what it may hold. We don’t just worry about ourselves. We also worry about our relationships, finances, decisions, children, and even world peace. The future is uncertain, and worry is proof that a part of us is aware of this uncertainty. Avoiding worry means becoming more comfortable with uncertainty. It is a known fact that our reality is filled with uncertainty; yet the brain craves certainty. The fear of not knowing what lies ahead impedes our long-term welfare. Many of us have become good at worrying, so it feels productive-but it isn’t. Spending a day worrying is tiring. We believe that we accomplish a lot by worrying, right? Wrong. Instead, this type of thinking is akin to spending a day digging a hole and expecting your car to start running better - there is no correlation between worrying and finding productive solutions.

It’s time to stop worrying about things in our lives over which we have no control. Let’s start trusting The One who has all things under His control. If you are a Christian, then worrying sends a wrong message about where you put your trust. It says, “I have no one”. However, as a Christian, we believe that God has everything in His control. If He is in control, then we have nothing to worry about. We only need to trust that God will take care of everything according to His plan. (Proverbs3:5-6)

“Worrying is carrying tomorrow's load with today's strength- carrying two days at once. It is moving into tomorrow ahead of time. Worrying doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.”

- Corrie Ten Boom

Health Issues Associated with Worrying

Worrying doesn't just sap your happiness. It can also contribute to a wide variety of health issues that can easily be eliminated or improved just by worrying less. Your doctor will never tell you that you need more stress in your life. Worry induces stress. Your body releases stress hormones when you worry. These hormones can have a negative impact on your blood sugar, triglycerides, digestion, mood, blood vessels, heart, and immune system. While stress can increase your physicality in the short-term, it harms your health in the long-term.

This is how worry can damage your health and shorten your lifespan:

1. Heart Disease

Stress induces increased heart rate, blood pressure, and causes an increase in cholesterol levels. Also, there's an increase in the likelihood of obesity, which contributes to heart disease.

2. Diabetes

Worrying can increase blood sugar levels in those with Type II diabetes. Worrying also can lead to overeating and poor nutritional choices.

3. Headaches

Those who suffer from regular headaches, including migraines, will attest to the fact that worrying can cause and worsen headaches.

4. Stomach and intestinal issues

Stress doesn't cause ulcers, but it can make them worse. Heartburn and irritable bowel syndrome have been linked to worrying. Some people vomit when faced with stressful situations.

5. Obesity

High stress causes higher levels of the hormone cortisol, which increases the storage of belly fat. Again, worrying can also affect eating habits, which poses other health risks as obesity is a major contributor to many other diseases.

6. Depression

Worrying can lead to depression. People who worry excessively are 80% more likely to develop depression. Depression can lead to other psychological issues like suicide.

7. Premature aging

Stress and worry can prematurely age your DNA! Studies show that the chromosomal damage experienced by those with high -stress levels mimic the chromosomes of those up to 15 years older.

Worrying is not just unpleasant. It can kill you!

How you handle stress and worry can impact your physical health and longevity. Remember that stress is only the trigger; it's your response that can cause health problems. Choose a healthy reaction to your problems, and your health will be enhanced.



“Never let the future disturb you. You will meet it, if you have to, with the same weapons of reason which today arm you against the present.”
- Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

Signs That You Worry Too Much

How do you know that you're worrying too much? There are some common signs that you worry too much. By recognizing these symptoms, you can begin to take control of your worrying habit. A little worry is normal for an unbeliever, but as a Christian this should not be our way of life at all. Excessive worry gets in the way of enjoying life and resolving your challenges.



Excessive worry can cause:

1. Sleep disturbances

Do you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep? Do you wake up feeling anxious or as if your mind is racing? If so, the cause may be excessive worrying. Of course, everyone has an occasional night of poor sleep or anxiety before a big event, but regular disturbances in sleep are neither normal nor healthy.

Take note of how many hours you normally sleep. If the number suddenly drops and you're not making up the time on the weekends, you may be worrying too much. Consistent sleep is also necessary for optimal health.

2. Muscle tension

You may have experienced pain in your neck, back, or jaw from excessive tension. If you regularly feel muscle tension in one or more parts of your body, you might be worrying more than you should.

3. Chronic digestion issues

Indigestion, irritable bowel syndrome, constipation, diarrhea, and stomachaches can all be signs that your worrying is out of control. If you're regularly having difficulties with your digestive system, be sure to see your physician.

4. Difficulties concentrating

Poor concentration can affect every part of your life. Even with moderate stress and worry, it's possible to maintain a good level of attention on any task. However, if you're unable to keep your mind on your current task, you might be worrying too much.

More Signs That You Worry Too Much

Do you worry constantly?

Ask yourself how much time of my day do I spend worrying?

Does your worrying interfere with your obligations?

Are you too worried about work to spend time with your kids? Are you so worried about tomorrow that you are missing out on the pleasures of today?

If you’re dealing with these symptoms regularly, your health and happiness are at stake. Consider this a warning and begin the process of forming more positive responses to stressful situations.



“A hundred loads of worry will not pay an ounce of debt”.
- George Herbert

Common Causes of Worry

Whenever you are faced with a difficult situation in life, and you find yourself worrying, think about this: everybody has the same issues and challenges. Unfortunately, one of the lies the enemy sells to us is that our issues are exclusive. However, no one is excluded from being afraid of the unknown or having a challenge and not knowing how to tackle them. It is a universal challenge. There is also an old saying: “the more special you think your problem is, the more universal it might be” and I find it to be quite true. Doesn’t that give you some type of relief –knowing that some other person is going through the same challenges as you? The only difference is in how people handle challenges. Some people take on the challenge and keep moving forward. Some people prefer to have a laissez-faire attitude to life, while others prefer to take a safer approach to life. But I can assure you, the “riskier” option is always the safer one, and the “safer” one has bigger consequences. Think about it for a moment: Do you believe that it is “safer” to stay in a job that is not right for you in order to avoid unemployment?

The most common causes of worry include:

1. Finances

It’s not only those who are experiencing financial challenges who worry about money. The wealthy worry about their finances, too.

The only true solutions to money issues are spending less, earning more, or bankruptcy. One or more of these options is necessary to create change in your financial situation.

2. Work-related issues

In this case, the worry might be due to a fear of losing your job which would then cause financial challenges. Worry can also be related to dealing with challenging personalities, giving a presentation, or a looming deadline.

It’s inevitable that work will cause stress from time to time: you spend a lot of time there, it’s a competitive environment, it’s also your primary source of income; hence it tends to cause worry.

3. Relationship issues

Our close relationships, especially our romantic relationships, can be a source of stress or drama.

4. Health concerns

The survival instinct is among the strongest. If your health is failing, it only makes sense to be concerned.

It’s easy to find yourself stuck with what appears to be a bleak future. Refuse to believe those lies and know that you have time to change course and create a meaningful life.

5. Your children

We worry about their safety. We worry whether we're being good parents. Kids can get sick, struggle with school, or struggle socially. Whenever you care about someone, especially someone who is dependent on you, you're likely to worry.

6. The future

All worries are grounded in the future because we are concerned about the decisions we've made in life and how they will affect the future.

What do you worry about? Did I hear you say all of the above! Then another question I will ask is has your worrying ever helped?



"It is not the cares of today, but the cares of tomorrow that weigh a man down. For the needs of today we have corresponding strength given. For the morrow we are told to trust. It is not ours yet. It is when tomorrow's burden is added to the burden of today that the weight is more than a man can bear."
- George Macdonald



"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Matt 6:25-30)

In this passage Jesus isn't saying we should live irresponsible lives and just assume everything will be okay. That is far from the truth. This is an invitation for us to play our part and leave the rest to God.

Worry cannot create a tomorrow that is certain so indeed it is a waste of time.

If God takes care of birds and flowers who were not created in his image how will he not take care of you. When we worry we display a lack of confidence in the ability and capability of God . If only we would trust in the one that knows tomorrow and lives in today and tomorrow, we would see the emotion, expressed as worry driven out of our lives.

This passage ends with Jesus talking about the size of faith. this shows that there is a correlation between the size of your faith and the ability to worry. Little faith equals big worries. Big faith will manifest as a worry-free life.

To fight and win the battle over worry this is a battle that definitely must be won in the place of faith. The question that you need to answer is how big is your faith?

"Worry often gives a small thing a big shadow".
~ Swedish proverb

Worrying Doesn't Work

I ask again, has your worrying ever solved a single problem? Think about it for a few minutes. It hasn't. The only positive outcome of worry is when it leads to action that solves an issue. Beyond that, worrying makes you less effective in dealing with life's trials and tribulations.

Let's think about it, worrying has never:

- Paid a bill
- Repaired a failing relationship
- Healed someone
- Improved anyone's physique
- Bettered someone's mood
- Made a job more fun or secure
- Taken out the trash
- Mowed the grass
- Painted the house
- Or kept the overbearing family member away

More often, the thing you worry about never happens. If it does, it's rarely as bad as you anticipated. Worrying is a means of torturing yourself. Worrying is self-inflicted torture. Take control and resolve that you're going to worry less. *"He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, but he who forsakes reproof goes astray"* – **(Proverbs 10:17)**. Since worrying isn't a healthy habit, people have found various coping mechanisms to deal with it.



*"No one can pray and worry
at the same time."
- Max Lucado*

Coping Strategies for Worrying

When you worry, you inevitably turn to one or more coping mechanisms. These behaviors can either be harmful, neutral, or helpful. When you're worried, the worst thing you can do is make your challenges more significant. Yet, that's exactly what many people do.

Negative coping behaviors that can make life more challenging are:

1. Drinking
2. Drugs
3. Overeating
4. Starvation (i.e. anorexia, bulimia)
5. Casual sex
6. Self-inflicted harm (i.e. cutting or burning of skin, pulling hair)

All of these behaviors tend to create additional problems down the road and all of them have the potential to cause harm.

These behaviors serve to distract; they fail to solve the source of your worry, and make life harder. If you are dealing with one or more personal issues, it would be wise to consider removing these coping mechanisms from your list of habits. There are also neutral coping mechanisms which fail to address the source of your worry, but don't cause additional harm. A few examples include:

1. Watching television
2. Surfing the internet
3. Reading a frivolous book
4. Listening to music
5. Watching comedy
6. Shopping

These coping behaviors won't make your challenges worse but do nothing to address the cause. However, they can potentially put you in a better mental state to begin making real progress. Neutral coping behaviors are less harmful and potentially more effective than negative coping behaviors. We also have positive coping behaviors people engage in when faced with worry. Some examples are:

Developing healthier lifestyle habits by eating nutritious meals, staying hydrated, getting enough sleep, exercising regularly. These are all healthy habits we should imbibe. The right association is also key. Connecting with friends and family who are positive and uplifting does play a major role.

Though these options can contribute to your physical and emotional health, understand that these are temporary solutions and will not address the source of your problems. The most effective solution to worry is found in the Bible. Anything else is an attempt to distract yourself, which at best will only give some form of temporary respite.

"You find no difficulty in trusting the Lord with the management of the universe and all the outward creation, and can your case be any more complex or difficult than these, that you need to be anxious or troubled about His management of it?"

- Hannah Whitall Smith

Regardless of your personality, mental fortitude, or good fortune, something will eventually happen that can trigger anxiety. While you might not completely avoid worrying, you can choose whether to dwell on it and how you react. In order to conquer the tendency to worry, you need to develop a process for dealing with the root cause of those issues successfully. By focusing on solutions, you can remove the trigger and get on with your life.

Have a plan for dealing with worry that focuses on solutions by asking these questions:

1. Am I worried?

Noticing when you start to worry is always the first step. It is trickier than you think. Mental patterns are very habitual, especially if you've been thinking the same way about the world for a long time. Worrying can start to feel normal.

2. Why am I worried?

Do you know why you're worried? Just ask yourself, "What am I worried about?" Listen to the answer you receive. Some worries disappear simply by shining a light on them.

3 Is this a cause for worry?

It's easy to worry about unreasonable things. You may be worried about your job security due to the announcement of future cutbacks. If no one has spoken to you about your position or your performance, do you really have a reason to worry?

4. Can I do anything to fix it?

Why worry if there's nothing you can do to fix it? Whatever is going to happen will happen whether you worry or not. You may as well enjoy yourself as much as possible right now.

However, if you can do something about it, why worry? There's no reason to worry about a situation you can fix! Get busy fixing it.

5. How can I create a solution?

Assuming you can create a more acceptable outcome, what do you do?

Create a plan to solve your dilemma. For example, if you're worried about funding your upcoming vacation, you might consider:

- Finding a part-time job
- Tightening your budget
- Cancelling cable
- Carpooling to work
- Asking for a raise
- Finding a job with a higher salary

Create a detailed plan and follow it. Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of your plan. Avoid operating with blinders.

6. Avoid procrastinating

The solution to your problem might not be enjoyable, but you can relax when you're finished. The more you procrastinate, the more likely you are to worry. Your worrying will increase as the amount of time you have to rectify the situation shrinks. Take a deep breath and get started. Freedom from worry is the ultimate reward.

Stay focused. You only worry when your mind starts to wander, and you think negative thoughts. Focus on the solution. Attempt to get the necessary work done with a smile on your face and remain calm.

7. Realize that worrying is an ineffective habit

If worrying doesn't help and doesn't feel good, how does it ever become a habit? It is because you've tricked yourself into believing that it's beneficial.

You've worried about many things. In most cases, everything turns out okay. It's natural for your brain to link worrying with acceptable results.

Having the cognitive awareness that worrying is a waste of time isn't enough to eliminate the worry habit.

"Most Christians are being crucified on a cross between two thieves: Yesterday's regret and tomorrow's worries."

- Warren Wiersbe

What to do when Worry Strikes

How can you combat worry and anxiety? For someone reading this, you might say to yourself , “Yeah, all that I have read so far sounds good in theory, but how do I actually do it?”

I totally get you because I was in the same place you are right now. I, too, struggled with overcoming worry. Worry and anxiety are rooted in fear; simply applying logic does not provide a lasting solution. Reminding yourself of what the Bible says won’t always work until you put it to practice. Over the years I’ve found a number of ways to try and break the cycle of worry. They are all biblically based. I pray that as you begin to implement these biblical principles, you will find the liberty and victory I have experienced in Jesus' name.

1. Gratitude

Several studies have linked gratitude to lower levels of depression and less suicidal ideation, including a 2010 study published in the Clinical Psychology Review. Worry takes situations out of its perspective and shifts your focus. Gratitude ensures you align your focus with God and how blessed you are rather than your life problems. Paul wrote to the Philippians that they should:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let their requests be made known to God”
(Phil. 4:6-7).

In other words, “Tell God what you need and thank him for what he’s already done”. When we do this, Paul says that the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds.

2. Speak out loud. Stop the cycle

I often just say “stop” out loud, to make myself pay attention (to myself...). You don’t stop thoughts with thoughts, you stop thoughts with words. Arm yourself with the word that you can say anytime you find yourself worrying. I will often take a deep breath and whisper/mutter to myself, “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt. 6:34).

It’s my secret code for reminding myself that I need to stop dwelling on the issue for now—in other words, don’t borrow trouble from tomorrow. You should do the same too. Find a verse or phrase from a verse that works as a strong reminder for you to stop worrying.

3. Put a hedge around your mind

Have you ever found yourself thinking illogical thoughts and before you know it you find yourself going down this dark tunnel and you wonder how did you get there? The Bible talks about the life of Job in Job 1:10 where he was secured from the affliction of the devil by a hedge around him. The same principle can be applied here: If our minds are fortified by The Word of God, the devil cannot influence our thinking.

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

Change your worrisome thoughts rather than suppress them. The more you try not to think about something that worries you, the more preoccupied your mind becomes with that thought, which makes you think about it even more. Suppressing your thoughts about your troubles doesn’t work.

4. Pray! Pray! Pray!

Pray for the Holy Spirit to renew your mind and help you evaluate how every thought that enters it compares to biblical truth. Take some time in prayer and Bible study (often these types of issues can indicate we’re not staying as close to God as we should be). In other words, you are what you think about. When your thoughts are full of worry and anxiety, go and pray. You can decide to stop dwelling on the potential perils of this world, pray about those issues, and invite God to work in the situations that worry you. Choose to pray instead of worrying.

5. Read something positive and uplifting

There is nothing as uplifting as the Bible. The benefits of reading the Bible are numerous but for this we will just pick two benefits: God’s word brings us joy (Psalms 119:111) “I have inherited Your testimonies forever, For they are the joy of my heart”. The Bible also gives us hope therefore there is no need to worry about the future. (Romans. 15:4) “Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

6. Go for a walk and listen to a sermon

Be intentional No matter how hard you try, you can’t stop bad things from happening, because you live in a fallen world. However, you do have the choice of how you respond to whatever happens. Look for sermons that address the pressing issues and receive a RHEMA word that will help you refocus and trust God.

“Worry is nothing but practical infidelity. The person who worries reveals his lack of trust in God and that he is trusting too much in self”.
- Lee Roberson

Conclusion

“Worrying is one of the most common activities undertaken by human beings. People claim they can’t help themselves. While it’s normal to be concerned about something, it’s unhealthy to worry about it. That’s because concern motivates you to do something to solve problems or plan helpful ways to cope with them but worry keeps you stuck on problems and distracts you from planning any helpful solutions. Using the biblical principles outlined in this book will help combat this very dangerous habit. Don't focus on doing these steps perfectly, but steady and persistent choices will get you toward the change of heart and mind.

Worrying not only fails to address the cause of the worry, it can potentially damage your health. Keep in mind that everything is possible when you believe. You don’t have to worry when you remember that God is always working on your behalf. Choose to believe that God will do what’s best for you; place your hope in Him.(Jeremiah 29:11) “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Focus on the fact that God is always with you, place your confidence in God’s goodness, and trust Him to accomplish good purposes through whatever type of circumstances you go through at any given time. (Psalm 16:8) “I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”

Make a habit of noticing the many ways that God is blessing you every day, and then intentionally express thanks to God for your relationship with Him and the blessings that He constantly gives you. You can't stop worrying by trying to stop worrying; that can never work. Its a faith issue If you truly believe that God is able to do all things and has control over everything then let your faith take the ultimate step by trusting him with your today, tomorrow and your everyday



Here are a handful of verses that get right to the heart of the Bible’s take on worry and anxiety:



“Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad” (Prov. 12:25)

“In the multitude of my anxieties within me, your comforts delight my soul” (Ps. 94:19)

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on” (Matt. 6:25-34)

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27)

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7)

Verses that get right to the heart of the Bible’s take on worry and anxiety:

“Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved [shaken]” (Ps. 55:22)

“And Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her’” (Luke 10:41-42)

“I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Ps. 34:4)

“For what has man for all his labor, and for the anxious striving for which they labor under the sun?” (Eccl. 2:22; NIV)

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties” (Ps. 139:23, NIV)



“BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING, BUT IN EVERYTHING BY
PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION, WITH THANKSGIVING, LET
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