

WORRY TIME

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PURPOSE: This exercise is very helpful for those who struggle with worry, ruminate, or are prone to the “Big Three” negative feelings of anger, anxiety, and depression. You can learn to control the process of worrying so that you don’t have to fight every upsetting thought you have during the day.

BASIC STRUCTURE: Create 2 set worry times for yourself each day. Try to do these *worry times* at times during the day when you are relaxed and centered—for example, after exercising, relaxing, or at a time of day when you are at your best. Try to do the same times each day (for example: noon and 8:30pm).

Spend 15 minutes to worry about your problem(s). It is best to set a timer on your phone. Do not stop till your time is up.

WHAT TO DO: Journal about your worries. Write each problem down and thoughts related to the feeling on paper (which is usually better than a computer).

Be compassionate and caring with yourself. Acknowledge each painful worry as you might a cut or bruise; that is, gently care for yourself and care for each worry by exploring the problem, how you feel, what the consequences of the problem are, what lessons you can learn from the worry, and how it might be managed or solved.

When you’re writing, feel free to brainstorm solutions, consider whether your thinking about the problem is distorted, and pick a solution or solutions to try that have the greatest chance for long-term success at a reasonable cost. At a later time, it can help to ask a trusted friend about which solution or solutions seems to be the best to try out first.

ENDING THE SESSION: After your phone alarm rings and the 15 minutes are up, end the session with a ritual. Some people put the worry paper in their favorite encouraging book. Others place it in their wallet or purse, or under a cushion in their favorite chair. Some people say a prayer as they put it in their Bible or under a cross. Follow this procedure in the same way each time! Make it a habit.

OUTSIDE OF WORRY TIMES: As soon as you notice worrying about something, postpone the worrying by promising yourself that you will think about the problem later in the day during a set *worry time*.

If you are still feeling worried outside of worry time, gently try to distract yourself from worries with:

- (a) Mindful Breathing, Praying, or Meditation. (use app *Stop, Breathe, Think*)
- (b) A service activity that benefits someone else such as calling a friend in need or helping out someone at the office.
- (c) Some activity that needs to be done.
- (d) Aerobic physical activity (30 minutes) of any kind such as walking.

Do not try to banish or suppress worries when they come. Welcome them as you might annoying relatives that you have to see by acknowledging them in the back of your mind and then gently refocusing your attention on the task at hand. To refocus attention, ask yourself, “What am I doing now? What is my goal?” thus, the abyss of ruminating about the perfect mate you let get away, becomes, “I am finishing this essay and want to stay in this moment and really want to express my thoughts clearly.” The goal of mindfulness is the practice of continually shifting your mind to your desired focus in a non-judgmental way.