



GUIDELIGHT HEALTH

Worry Group



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Worry Group Details

About Worry

3 MINUTES

wor•ry

a state of mental distress or agitation due to concern about an impending or anticipated event, threat, or danger"

American Psychological Association, 2024

Worry focuses on the "what ifs" and potential bad things that could happen in the future. Worry is a normal human experience but is also a "slippery slope" and can rapidly spiral out of control.

Worry becomes problematic when it is excessive (that is, difficult to control and frequent) and leads to distress or difficulty functioning in daily life. Often, people worry about several different things at once and the focus of worry may shift over time. Common issues that people tend to worry about include everyday responsibilities, health, finances, and the well-being of family members. Children and adolescents tend to worry more about school and

sports performance and older adults tend to worry more about their own health and their loved ones' well-being (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

When worry becomes difficult to control, persistent, and excessive, it may be part of a condition known as generalized anxiety disorder or GAD (American Psychological Association, 2024). Excessive, out of control worry is often associated with additional symptoms such as restlessness or feeling on edge, being easily fatigued, having difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension, and sleep difficulties (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

How to Cope with Worry

15 MINUTES

If you are struggling with excessive worry, it is helpful to complete a Worry Diary to get more information about how often you are worrying and what you tend to worry about.



GROUP LEADER: Provide the Worry Diary handout to participants and refer to it throughout this discussion.

The **Worry Diary** includes making an entry into the diary each time you find yourself worrying. We want to include date and time of worry episode, the situation that you were in when worrying, the topic of your worry and how much anxiety your worry caused

you. It is also very important to determine what "kind" of worrying you were doing. There are two kinds of worry.

TYPE 1 WORRY: Worry associated with a real-world problem, such as worrying about not doing well on an upcoming exam. If you are worrying about a Type 1 Worry, then the best strategy to manage this type of worry is PROBLEM SOLVING. We cover Problem Solving strategies in another group.

TYPE 2 WORRY: Worry about a future, hypothetical problem, such as getting cancer at some point in your life even though you have no symptoms.



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If you are worrying about a Type 2 Worry, then a technique called WORRY EXPOSURE is the most helpful strategy to reduce worry and anxiety (*Dugas & Ladouceur, 2000*). We will get back to Worry Exposure in a moment. First, back to the Worry Diary.

As you can see on the Worry Diary it asks you to determine if your worry is Type 1 or 2. This is important as it will guide you as to what the best strategy is to control your worry and reduce your anxiety.



GROUP LEADER: At this point you will engage the group in an activity to help them understand the difference between Type 1 and 2 Worry. You will read off a worry and have them vote on if it is a type 1 or type 2 worry. Ask them to raise their hand with one or two fingers up to vote on which type of worry they think each one is. Then, facilitate discussion, particularly if there is a specific worry participants struggled to categorize.

Read these worries...

- > I'm worried about getting my report done well and submitting it on time (if adolescents — I'm worried about doing well on my school project and getting it done on time). [TYPE 1]
- > I'm worried that my mom's cancer will come back. [TYPE 2]
- > What if my best friend stops wanting to be friends with me? [TYPE 2]
- > What if I don't do well on my piano recital next week? I can't seem to get through one section without making mistakes. [TYPE 1]
- > What if my boyfriend gets in a car accident due to the storm? [TYPE 2]
- > I can't find someone to watch my kids next weekend. I'm worried I'll have to miss an important work dinner and my boss will be upset with me. [TYPE 1]
- > What if my plane crashes when I go on vacation next month? [TYPE 2]

Worry Exposure

25 MINUTES

Worry Exposure and developing a Worry Script is the best strategy to combat Type 2 Worry and the anxiety it produces.



GROUP LEADER: Hand out the Worry Exposure form and discuss each step.

First, we will identify a Type 2 Worry to work on. We want a worry that is bothersome and causes anxiety but not one of the worries that trouble you the most. We want to start with a worry that is challenging but manageable to learn the technique. Next, we want to ask ourselves, "what is the worst thing that can happen?" Don't "sugarcoat" your fear. Be honest with yourself and think of what you are really afraid might happen.

In Step 3 we will want to visualize this worst-case scenario. Close your eyes and picture the feared event in your mind as clearly as you possibly can.



GROUP LEADER: Review instructions for Step 3 - 6 in detail from the Worry Exposure form including having group participants write a draft of their Worry Script.

Worry Exposure helps remove avoidance of thinking through the details of the hypothetical worry, as often anxiety makes it difficult for someone to do this. Allow yourself to explore in detail your feared consequence. With repetition, Worry Exposure helps individuals cope with anxiety by facing it head-on and realizing that their anxiety reduces when going through this exercise completely.



Some Additional Important Points About Worry

5 MINUTES

Beliefs about Worry

Individuals who worry excessively often have some “positive” beliefs about worry. These may include (Hebert, Dugas, Tulloch, & Holowka, 2014):

- Worrying helps me solve problems.
- Worrying helps me be more motivated to do things I should do.
- Worrying protects me from painful feelings.
- Worrying helps prevent bad things from happening.
- Worrying shows that I am a caring, good person.

These beliefs may make it more likely that someone continues to worry due to fear of the consequences if they stop. For example, if someone believes worry protects them or their loved ones from harm, they may struggle to decrease worrying even if it is making them miserable or impacting their ability to function. As a result, positive beliefs regarding worry need to be challenged and reduced.



GROUP LEADER: Ask the group to think about what positive beliefs they may have about worry and how those may interfere with their ability to use Worry Exposure effectively

At Home Practice

2 MINUTES

If you are struggling with excessive worry, it may be helpful to try the strategies discussed today.

- Start using the **Worry Diary** to learn more about how often you worry, what you worry about, and if you have more Type 1 or Type 2 worries.
- Look over your Worry Script and edit it using the questions from Step 4 of the **Worry Exposure** Handout. Once your script is refined, read it over as described in the handout to reduce your worry and anxiety.
- Reduce any positive beliefs about worry.



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