

[Excerpt from chapter entitled *Worried Sick*]

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*“Today is the tomorrow we
worried about yesterday.”*

Anonymous

Worrying is like paying debt on a loan you may not owe. It’s a waste of time, a senseless burner of energy and ambition. It can even lead to illness. Its fire is fueled by negative thinking, and it can have a scorching effect on your ability to positively progress toward your goals.

However, you can extinguish the burning effects of worrying by assessing this feeling in a different way. Recognize that worrying is largely an unproductive feeling: If you worry and you’re wrong, then you wasted your time; if you worry and you’re right, then you wasted your time.

Let’s take a look at ways to conquer worrying.

Take Action

Worry is often a game played by the mind - so eliminate it with action! Here are some specific steps you can take to deal head-on with worry:

1. Identify your goals and write them down.
2. Establish a plan to accomplish each goal.
3. Try to anticipate any challenges that might arise as you put your plan into action and put remedies in place for possible alternative outcomes. Be sure to separate the real obstacles from those based on past experiences that may have nothing to do with what’s going on in your life now.

Developing a written plan of action like this will show you that you’re on the right path, strengthening your courage and confidence. It will immediately reduce your worries. (See Chapter Three for a sample chart on setting goals.)

Create a “Worry File”

If you’re still struggling with eliminating thoughts and feelings of worry, then create a “worry file.” Here, you can create a list of everything you’re worried about. Put your typed or written list in a folder. Make an agreement with yourself that you will evaluate the list on a certain day of each month. Continue to add to the list whenever something comes up which concerns you.

Then, on the scheduled day, without looking at the folder or its contents, throw the paper in your wastebasket. Start recognizing that you need not deal with “worry” because it’s not real; it’s just something we tend to make up when we don’t know how something’s going to turn out. (If you do look at the list you created, I’ll bet that just about everything on it has been resolved or disappeared by now.)

As Winston Churchill once said, “When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened.”

Be Present

Don’t confuse “worry” with “hope.” I can hope and pray that my friend’s surgery goes well, but I won’t worry about the surgery; I’ll presume it will go as the experts say. If it doesn’t, I’ll address whatever concern comes up *if and when* it comes up, which will likely be after the surgery.

This, in fact, is one of the best ways to eradicate or at least cope with worry: Commit to address a problem only when it truly poses a concern—and not a minute before. As Atticus Finch often told his children in the well-known book *To Kill a Mockingbird*, develop the habit of saying to yourself, “It’s not time to worry yet.”

If you’re still unable to shake your concerns, then go to Plan B: Consider the worst possible outcomes and make a plan in advance to help you avoid each possible situation or at least to have a great solution that will help you work through it when the time comes.

This kind of solution-based thinking, which concentrates on forward and productive action, will always place you in a great position to deal with any situation. It’s time to pour water on the fire of worry. With an optimistic attitude toward life and your future, you can provide an unending source of water to extinguish this harmful flame, so that it doesn’t devour your path to more enrichment.

*“Do not worry about the world
coming to an end today. It is
already tomorrow in Australia.”*

Charles M. Schultz

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