

UNDERSTANDING WORRY

WHAT IS WORRY?

Worrying consists of thinking about problems or fears and is something that we do when we feel anxious. Worry is an evolutionary behaviour that helps to protect us from potential danger and to prepare for the future, but we can also worry about normal every day situations. Worries are often negative thoughts about yourself or the world, predictions about the future, thoughts about your inability to cope, thinking that something bad will happen, and thinking that the worst thing will happen.

Worries can be categorised into 2 types: practical and hypothetical.

Practical worries are about things that are happening now and we can usually do something about them. An example is "I have not done my homework and it is due in today".

Hypothetical worries often begin with "what if" as they are predictions about the future and they have not happened yet. There may be things that we can do to prevent these worries from coming true but ultimately, we are unable to control the future. An example is "what if my friends don't want to hang out with me anymore".



Worries are completely normal, and our brain's way of helping us to stay safe, however we can sometimes worry too much which can have a negative impact on our wellbeing. Worrying can become a problem when it becomes frequent, overwhelming, and interferes with your normal daily life.

WHAT KEEPS WORRY GOING?

When we worry, we can get stuck in 2 types of "vicious" cycles, which makes it hard for us to stop worrying. Firstly, we can have negative beliefs about worrying such as "I shouldn't be worried about this", which leads us to worry more, and makes us worry about worrying. Secondly, we can have positive beliefs about worry, as we think that worrying is a good thing and is helping us, which makes it difficult to stop worrying.

When we worry we can also behave in ways that stop us from managing worry in a healthy way. We may avoid or put things off, we may spend a lot of time overpreparing, and we may seek reassurance from others. As a result, we do not learn how to overcome the worry, and we become less confident in our own ability to cope.

TOP TIPS TO MANAGE WORRY

- 1 **Schedule worry time.** Choose a time and place to have worry time each day (or how often is useful for you). Write down your worries as they come, then refocus and continue with your day. Review these worries during worry time, and allow yourself the time to worry. This lets you get on with your day without worrying, or worrying about forgetting the worries, and you may find that when you get to worry time, the worries are no longer important to you, or they have been resolved.
- 2 **Problem solve your practical worries.** If you are experiencing a practical worry that is within your control, you can problem solve by thinking about possible solutions for the worry. Rate your solutions from best to worst, and give the best solutions a go. Remember to ask for help from an adult if you need it.
- 3 **Challenge your hypothetical ("what if") worries.** Ask yourself these questions: Has it happened before? How likely is it to happen? How important will this worry be in 1 year? Is it something that I can change or control? What evidence do I have that it will happen?
- 4 **Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness helps you to focus on the present moment, distract from hypothetical worries, and reduce the impact that worries have. You can find guided mindfulness videos on YouTube.
- 5 **Try new things and challenge yourself.** This helps you to learn about situations that may usually cause you to worry, and this helps you to become more confident and resilient to worrying. This also helps to improve your coping skills, and you never know, you might find a new hobby or interest!
- 6 **Talking to someone** can help you to process and understand your feelings better. It is also helpful to share ideas about how you can help yourself with another person - "A problem shared, is a problem halved".

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE SUPPORT?

USEFUL WEBSITES:

www.YoungMinds.co.uk
www.TheMix.org.uk
www.Kooth.com

USEFUL APPS:



Chill Panda



What's Up



Kooth (website)



Think Ninja



**IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE UNABLE TO
MANAGE WORRY ON YOUR OWN, YOU CAN
SPEAK TO A TRUSTED ADULT AT SCHOOL
ABOUT BEING SUPPORTED BY THE MENTAL
HEALTH IN SCHOOLS TEAM.**