

Worry at Work: Untrain Your Monkey Mind

What is worry?

- Worrying is a type of repetitive negative thinking
- Worry typically involves thoughts about what bad things might happen in the future and/or whether a person will be able to cope with them

Types of Worry

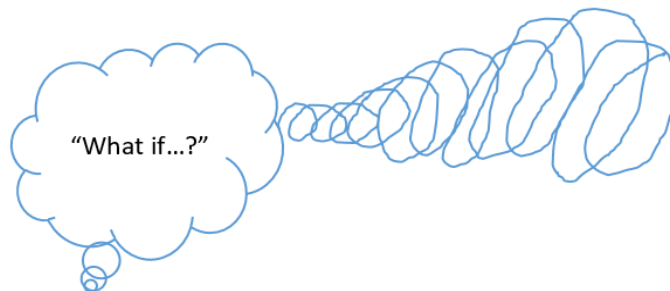
- Real Worries
 - About real situations
 - Need to be solved now
 - Taking action to solution focus
- Hypothetical Worries
 - Do not exist or have not actually happened
 - These are problems that *might* happen in the future
 - These worries are the “What if...?” thoughts

“What if...?” Worries

- “What if?” thoughts occur when we are stressed, panicked or worried about something in the future
- These thoughts become problematic when they cause distress or interfere with a person’s ability to function

The Worry Spiral

- The “what if” thoughts become a problem when we respond to them in a way that gives the thoughts lots of importance, time, energy, and attention



- These negative thoughts spiral into more negative thoughts that don’t go anywhere productive

What Maintains Worry? Unhelpful Beliefs about Worry

- **Positive Beliefs:** holding a positive belief that worrying is beneficial and helpful.
 - The person will pull the negative thoughts closer, spending more time on these negative thoughts believing this is helpful.
 - Worrying helps me find solutions to problems
 - Worrying is doing something
- **Negative Beliefs:** holding a negative belief that worrying is bad and the person will worry about the fact that they are worrying.
 - The person will want to push the worrisome thoughts away.
 - Worrying is dangerous and will cause either physical or mental harm
 - Worrying is uncontrollable and will take over and result in a loss of control

What Maintains Worry? Unhelpful Attention

- When people worry, they have difficulty taking their attention away from their negative thoughts to focus on the present task.
 - The person may be unaware they're spiraling through negative thoughts.
 - The person may be aware and they think the worrying is helpful to think more about things.
- Focusing attention on the negative thoughts keep the person stuck in their worry. This creates a belief that worrying is uncontrollable.

What Maintains Worry? Unhelpful Strategies

- Mental Strategies:
 - Suppressing worries: telling yourself to “stop worrying.”
 - Reasoning with their worrisome thoughts: telling yourself “the likelihood of these things happening is so small.”
 - Distracting themselves: focusing on something else.
 - Thinking positively: telling yourself “everything will be okay.”
- Behavioural Strategies:
 - Reassurance seeking from others to ease their concerns
 - Excessive information seeking
 - Using substances/alcohol/food/shopping to dull the worry

Notes:

Write Down Your Worries

- Writing down our worries interrupts the worry spiral created by our stress response to a “what if” thought.
- Writing down our worries helps us to see more clearly what our fears are, allows for intentionally choosing other thoughts to think and to reconnect with the present moment.

Writing to Cope with our Worries

- Identify real worries and hypothetical worries
- Categorize worries into two columns:
 - Can't Control
 - Can Control
- Keep a paper and a pen on your nightstand
- Make an A and B list
 - A: non-negotiable tasks you're worried about that must be accomplished
 - B: tasks that can wait until list A is done

Rethinking Your Thoughts

- Think about this: When you are feeling good, what sorts of thoughts drift through? When you are feeling bad, what sorts of thoughts are you having?
- Challenge your thoughts during your worry time using **Helpful Thinking**.
 - What is the worst that could happen? What could I do to cope?
 - How can I make the best of this situation?
 - How can I see this a different or new way?
- Your answers will then allow you to come to a **Helpful Conclusion**.
 - What would be a more balanced and helpful thought to replace my worry?
 - Ask yourself: How much do I now believe in the original prediction?
 - Ask yourself: How intense are my emotions now from my original feeling about my initial “what if...” thought?

Worrying About Work

- Work-related worries can make it challenging to relax and recover when at home in the evenings or over the weekends.
- It may helpful to explore strategies for managing worries ongoing

Notes:
