

Fourth Week: Looking at the Core of Your Anxiety

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Created Jan 5 2009 - 1:29pm

We differ as to the kinds of things we worry about. Some of us worry about being abandoned by other people, some worry about not being able to take care of ourselves,



others worry about being humiliated, and others worry about losing their special status as "superior people". Let's take a look at the current financial worries that many of us have and ask, "What is the core theme of your worry?"

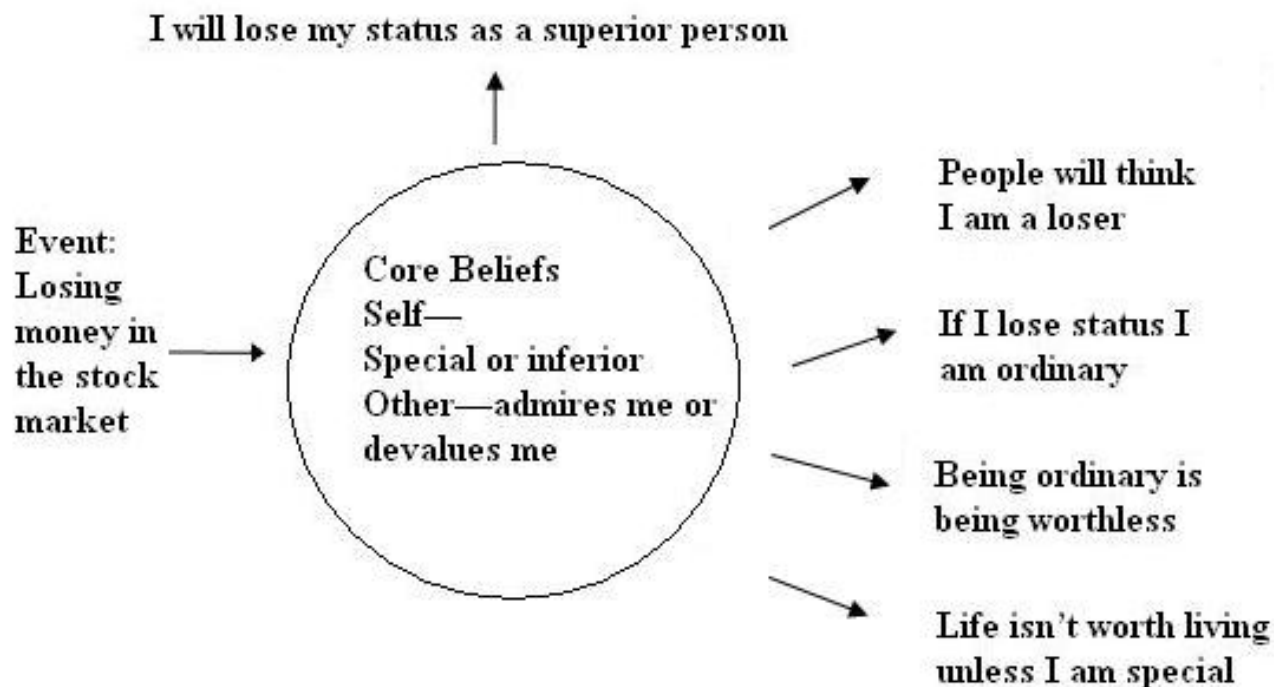
How is your current worry related to your underlying view of yourself and others?

Let's imagine five different people who are facing financial losses---or even the loss of their job. The first person thinks, "If I lose money or lose my job, my partner will abandon me." "I will be left all alone". The second person thinks, "If I lose money, then it proves that I am defective---there is something wrong with me. I'm a loser". The third person believes that her financial losses mean that she cannot provide her family with what they "need". Financial losses represent irresponsibility. A fourth person worries that his financial losses will lead to a loss in his special, unique status as a "successful person". He feels humiliated and devalued in the eyes of others. And, finally, our fifth worrier thinks that he won't be able to take care of his basic needs. He will become destitute-and visualizes himself in a homeless shelter, even though he has savings and could get another job.

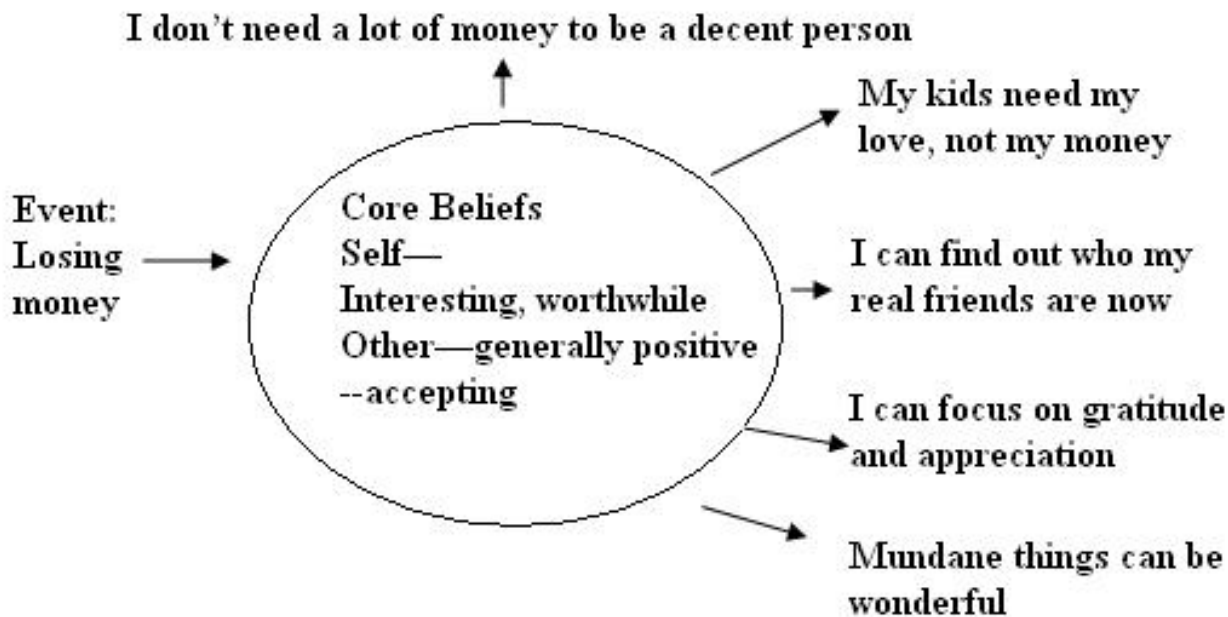


Let's take a look at how your core beliefs affect your worry. Take the person who thinks that he needs to be special and superior. He has now lost 40% of his savings, his job is on the

line and he worries all the time about becoming inferior. His worries are depicted in the figure below-and you can see how his worries reflect his core belief that he is either superior or inferior.



But perhaps he can put things in perspective and challenge his self-defeating thought that he needs to be special. What would this look like? What if he had a different view of himself as interesting, worthwhile and capable of enjoying the ordinary experiences in life? What would happen to those worries?



Your core beliefs tend to be "all-or-nothing" beliefs--- "I am helpless", "I am superior/inferior" or "I am totally responsible". How can you modify these core beliefs about yourself so that you can worry less?

Try the following:

1. Are there any advantages of thinking this way? Will it motivate you, keep you from being surprised? Does it really work for you-or does it make you miserable?
2. What if you thought of yourself as more complex? What if you gave up the all-or-nothing view of yourself and thought of yourself as "shades of gray"? What if you realized that your qualities as a human being vary with the situation or with time?
3. Where did you get these all-or-nothing labels? Did your [parents](#) lead you to believe that you were helpless, irresponsible, special, or inferior? Does it make sense to continue to believe the irrational and inhumane messages that you got as a kid? Is it time to live your life for your own good?
4. What is the evidence against your belief? For example, if you think that money is everything, then can you recall experiences that were rewarding that were free?
5. What advice would you give a friend? Are you more reasonable, more tolerant, more [forgiving](#) of other people? Why not apply that to yourself?

Whatever your recurrent worries, they are probably related to core beliefs about yourself and other people. Try to identify them, challenge them, and put them in perspective.

For further information, see my book [The Worry Cure: Seven Steps to Stop Worry from Stopping You](#)

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Links:

[1] http://www.amazon.com/Worry-Cure-Seven-Steps-Stopping/dp/1400097665/sr=8-2/qid=1168229522/ref=pd_bbs_sr_2/102-9636244-5523303?ie=UTF8&s=books

[2] <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/anxiety-files>