

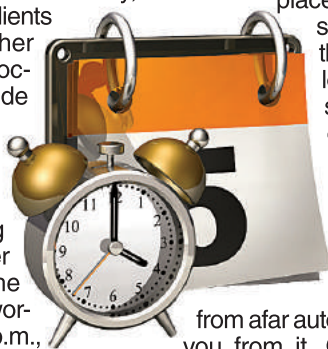
“Help! I worry all the time!”

Great news for the worrywart in all of us: “Research shows 85% of the things worriers fret about have a neutral or positive outcome,” says psychologist Robert L. Leahy, Ph.D. So there’s no reason to stress yourself out . . . and here’s how to stop!

1 Worry cures!

Make a worry date!

Is there ever a good time to worry? Yes, says expert Robert Leahy, who encourages his clients to schedule it. “Rather than letting worry preoccupy you 24/7, set aside a time, ideally late in the day, and make an appointment with yourself to worry. Simply postponing worry makes it bother you less. And by the time you get to your ‘worry date’ at, say, 3:30 p.m., the thing you were concerned about just doesn’t seem that important any longer!”



Climb a balcony!

Worried about mingling at an upcoming party or putting your best foot forward at a job interview? You can easily keep concerns in their place by picturing yourself actually above them! “Imagine you’re looking down on the situation from a balcony 15 to 20 stories up,” suggests Leahy. “Watching the party or job interview—or any other future event you’re worried about—from afar automatically distances you from it. Once you become the *observer*, your worries seem smaller, and you can more easily rehearse how you’d like to handle the situation.”

Turn concern into “cartoons”!

Turning worry into an image, something funny or absurd, helps shift your brain out of thinking about it abstractly, making it more manageable. “When a client of mine who was worried about public speaking personified that worry as a cartoon—giving it details like wild red hair—the silly image relaxed him!” says Leahy.



Bore your frets to death!

Repeat your worry to yourself . . . in a zombie voice! “It’s called the boredom technique,” reveals Leahy. “Silently repeating what you’re worried about, say, ‘I won’t be able to fall asleep tonight,’ in a slow, zombie-like voice for a few minutes makes the worry so dull, it becomes hard to focus on, so *you* become less preoccupied with it!”

2 “Empower” away anxiety!

Build your worry team!

What makes worries tick? “An exaggerated sense of vulnerability,” says psychiatrist Edward Hallowell, M.D. How then to reduce that sense of vulnerability? Build a worry team, so you never worry alone, he says. “Whether you’re concerned about your child going off to college or about moving to a new town, talk to an understanding friend. Getting things off your chest will make you feel better immediately. I call it Vitamin C for *connection*, the most powerful anti-anxiety ‘drug!’”



Gather the facts!

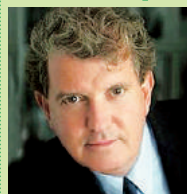
Take back the sense of control your worries have hijacked, urges Dr. Hallowell. “A lot of worries stem from a lack of—or wrong—facts, so arming yourself with the right information helps tame them.” For example, if you’re worried about flying to a new place, take three fact-finding steps: Familiarize yourself with a map, look at air travel statistics to learn how safe it really is and ask a friend who’s been where you’re going to recommend a few hot spots. “With facts comes a sense of control,” says Dr. Hallowell.

Create your perfect anti-worry plan!

Make two lists, advises expert Sue Orsillo, Ph.D. “Things that are in your control and things that aren’t. If you’re worried about impressing your boss, the *in-your-control* list might read “coming in on time” and “working hard,” while the *out-of-your-control* list might say, “if my boss likes me” and “if I get a raise.” The lists refocus you on what you can do now, rather than worrying about the past or the future. Then make a plan: ‘I’ll sit down for 15 minutes this morning and think of new ideas to bring to my boss.’”

—Kristina Mastrocola

Our expert panel



Robert L. Leahy, Ph.D.—author of *Anxiety Free* and *The Worry Cure*—is the director of The American Institute of Cognitive Therapy and a clinical professor of psychology at Weill-Cornell Medical School. Learn more at CognitiveTherapyNYC.com.



Psychiatrist Edward Hallowell, M.D., Ed.D.—author of *Worry* and coauthor of *Driven to Distraction*—is a leading authority on happiness, forgiveness and worry. Visit him at DrHallowell.com.



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