How Do Your Worries Interfere with Your Life?

Objective

To understand how your worries keep you from doing the things that are important in your life.

You Should Know

Thinking about the future is different than worrying. Unlike other animals, humans have a brain that is wired to think about the future. There is nothing wrong with thinking about what might happen in the future, as long as this thinking is based in reality and doesn't interfere with your living life to the fullest and enjoying each day. However, if you find that excessive worrying is interfering with your life and causing you to be anxious, then it is a problem you need to consider changing.

Worrying can shape your whole life without your realizing it. Many people are so used to worrying all of the time, they don't even realize how it is affecting their day-to-day choices. Sometimes people even justify their worrying by saying that it shows they are concerned about others or that it helps them focus on things that can be prevented. Again, it is okay to worry sometimes. But think about whether your excessive worry has become a habit that you just take for granted. Has it become such a part of your life that you worry about even the smallest of things throughout the day? Can you control your worrying, or does it prevent you from experiencing your life in the moment?

Does This Sound Like You?

After hearing about terrorist attacks at movie theaters and shopping malls, Diane became worried that terrorists would attack at public places near her. She started to avoid going places where there might be large crowd. If going to a place where a crowd would gather was unavoidable, like when she promised to take her daughter to the movies, Diane became very anxious. She couldn't sleep for several nights before the event. It seemed that she spent more and more time worrying about whether she or her family were going to places where there might be danger.

How are you like Diane? How is your worrying different? How is it the same?

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Do you see a pattern to your worrying?

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Is there something you would say to Diane that might help her stop worrying so much?

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Is there a rational statement you would make to yourself about your worrying?

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What to Do

Use the recording sheet on the next page and try to catch each time you think "what if "and write down how this worry is keeping you from living your life to the fullest.

Example:

Your Worry

What if I ask for a raise and my boss laughs at me?

How Is Your Life Being Affected?

I might never get a raise if I don't ask for it, and I could really use the money.

Use this recording sheet for one week.

Recording Sheet: How Does Worry Affect Your Life?

Week of _____

Your Worry	How Is Your Life Being Affected?

Think about it.

What is something in your past that you wish you had done, but you didn't do it because you worried too much?

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Write down two things you would like to do but your worries are holding you back.

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Write down two things that could motivate you to try these things despite your worrying, for example, encouragement from a friend or the desire to do something fun with your family.

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Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

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