

Worry Postponement For Uncertain Times

Psychologists think that there are two types of worry:

- 1. Real problem worries** are about actual problems affecting you right now and which you can act on now.
"My hands are dirty from gardening, I need to wash them"; "I need to call my friend or she will think I have forgotten her birthday"
"I can't find my keys"; "I can't afford to pay this electricity bill"; "My boyfriend isn't speaking to me".
- 2. Hypothetical worries** are about things that do not currently exist, but which *might* happen in the future.
"What if I die?"; "What if everyone I know dies?"; "Maybe this worrying is making me crazy"

People who are bothered by worry often experience it as *uncontrollable*, time consuming, and sometimes believe that it is beneficial to engage in worry when it occurs. Experimenting with postponing your worries – deliberately setting aside some time in your day to do nothing but worry and limiting the time you spend worrying – is a helpful way of exploring your relationship with worry. Follow the steps below for *at least* one week.

Step 1: Preparation

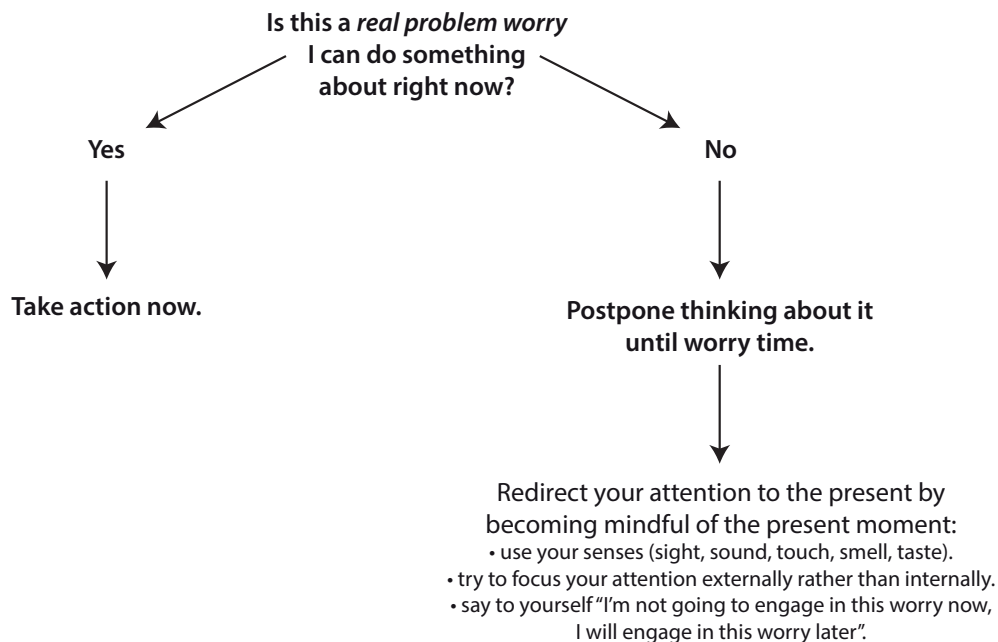
Decide **when** your worry time will be, and for **how long** it will be for.

- 'Worry time' is time you set aside every day for the specific purpose of worrying.
- What time of day do you think you will be in the best frame of mind to attend to your worries?
- When are you unlikely to be disturbed?
- If you are unsure, 15 to 30 minutes every day at 7:00pm is often a good starting point.



Step 2: Worry postponement

During the day, decide whether worries that surface are 'real problem' worries you can act on now, or whether they are hypothetical worries that need to be postponed.



Step 3: Worry time

Use your dedicated worry time for worrying. Consider writing down any of the hypothetical worries that you remember having had throughout the day. How concerning are they to you now? Are any of them the kinds of worries that can lead you to take practical actions?

- Try to use all of your allocated worry time, even if you do not feel that you have much to worry about, or even if worries do not seem as pressing at this time.
- Reflect upon your worries now – do they give you the same emotional 'kick' when you think about them now as they did when you first thought of them?
- Can any of your worries be converted into a practical problem to which you can look for a solution?