



HEALTH + WEALTH

POSTED ONLINE | AUGUST 2018

“Don’t Worry” – in 7 Steps

Many teens, including my eldest son, will receive exam results this month. This can be a stressful time for them. Although it is easy to say “Don’t worry” about the results, it is not as easy to do! In fact, if we are honest, it is much easier for us to say to someone else “Don’t worry” than it is to say it to the person in the mirror!

I could go into the science behind why we worry; how it’s part of a physical response designed to keep us safe or to enable us to flee from impending physical danger. I could explain how the thoughts and feelings that surround worrying are harmful to your health or wealth, as toxic stress hormones flood your body, but that would only cause you to worry more about your worrying.

We all have a tendency to worry about things that are outside our control or what might happen in the future. However, worrying about exam results after you have taken the exams will never change the results. Worrying about how you are going to pay the bills won’t help you set a budget and worrying about a change in the economy won’t affect your share prices.

Winston Churchill said “When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened”.

So instead of worrying about things that might never happen, why not take 5 minutes to have an intentional ‘Worry Time’? [You can download a full instruction sheet here](#) but in a nutshell, here’s our 7 step plan...

1. Make a list of everything you are worried about.
2. Split and re-write the list into 2 further lists:
 - a. Those things you ‘Can Control’ and
 - b. Those things you ‘Can’t Control’.
 Some things will need to go in both lists, for example, if you wrote money or health on your worry list, some aspects may be in your control, like setting a budget, or eating 5 portions of fruit and

veg a day, but some might not be, like your income or having an illness.

3. Put the ‘Can Control’ list to one side for a few minutes, and pick up the list you ‘Can’t Control’.
4. Set a timer on your phone for 5 minutes.
5. For the next 5 minutes, worry as much as you can about everything on the ‘Can’t Control’ list. Don’t hold back - let your mind go and think about all the worst case scenarios - as much exaggerated thinking as possible. If you are going to worry, now is the time to worry in style!
6. Once the 5-minute timer is up, pick up that piece of paper, screw it up into a ball and put it somewhere meaningful to you that represents you are done worrying about those things. This could be the bin, fire, shredder or saying a serenity prayer.

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference.”
7. Go back to the “Can Control” list and work out what single next action you can do to begin to take care of those worries. This could be something simple, such as:
 - Make a shopping list of the 5 fruit and veg you need to buy
 - Set a budget
 - Phone a friend to arrange a date to meet, etc.

This new list now becomes your Intentional “To-Do” List! Now your brain can focus on releasing some happy endorphins as you complete and cross off each item from your list.

Repeat as often as required to prevent worrying!

Bonus: You could even finish with doing some physical activity to mop up any leftover harmful stress and worry hormones which may be floating around your body from your brief and controlled worry time!

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