

FREE YOUR MIND

FROM WORRY

Stuck in a Worry Loop? Here's How to Break Free.

I have had some friends and relatives who worry all the time. About all sorts of things. Most of which never come to pass. The problem for me, is that all the exposure to their negative thinking is contagious. And, then I find myself worrying about things.

I have on occasion had some serious things to be concerned about, but I've found that when I worry, I lose sleep which in turn causes me to get less accomplished. So, I try to keep my problems in perspective.

I recall a friend's grandmother saying, "Worry is like a rocking horse; it consumes time and energy, but gets you nowhere."

Worry stems from our fear of the unknown. It is the anticipation of potential negative outcomes. We get anxious when we have invested time and effort into some endeavor; and it is reasonable to have expectations of the future. Worry in small doses is normal. It is tied to our sense of caution, and it helps us make plans, anticipate problems, and accomplish goals.

Too much worry, however, creates stress; and stress shuts down our ability to think creatively. When we can't think creatively, we can't solve the problem we were worried about to begin with.

I like the term: Future-Tripping because it aptly describes what we do when we worry. We stop living in the present; because we are spending all our time living in our mind hashing out the various possible scenarios the future may bring.

Shantideva, an 8th-century Indian Buddhist monk, put it this way, "If the problem can be solved then why worry? If the problem cannot be solved worrying will do you no good."

We can stop those thoughts by asking ourselves, "What is below the anxiety? What am I most afraid of? For me the recent economic recession would

occasionally send me into near panic as I watched my business slow down. The things I feared were months away, and could only come true if absolutely nothing changed in my life. Life however is constantly changing, and new opportunities arise every day.

I find I can control my negative thoughts by bringing them down to that which I can work on today. If my worry is really out of control, I will only focus on what I can accomplish over the next hour.

Sometimes I find mundane yard work helps me break the worry pattern - because like riding a rocking horse - it burns time and energy, but at least I'm accomplishing something. For me, the repetitious nature of mowing the grass or raking leaves has a meditative effect.

The purpose is to change your perspective. Others activities which help do this include, walking, hiking, biking, skating, working out in the gym. You want to shift your thoughts from negative to positive. Exercise makes you feel good which in turn leads to good thoughts.

Go to Bed; Take a Bath; Ride a Bus.

These relaxing activities encourage daydreaming. Many times it is in a moment of repose that we find the solution to the thing that is worrying us.

It was while relaxing in a bath that, Archimedes, the Greek mathematician and inventor, solved the problem of how to determine the density (mass per unit volume) of an object by measuring the amount of water it displaced.

Albert Einstein, who had been working on his theory of relativity for a long time, finally solved it by going to sleep. His equation $E=MC^2$ came to him in a dream. He said he dreamed he had fallen off a mountain, and that as he sped faster and

faster toward the ground, he looked up at the stars and saw that their appearance became altered as he approached the speed of light.

Kent Boxberger, an Atlanta-based business coach, says, "If you're feeling worried, you're not feeling free. You feel encumbered by something. You can't be worried and find a solution at the same time. To get out of worry-mode you have to think some different, 'better-feeling' thoughts, so that emotions can change direction. Continuing to look at the problem is like quicksand - the more you struggle with it - the worse it gets."

"The first step is to realize what you are doing, and become conscious of the worry. The second step is understanding that the solution is not found by continuing to look at or think about the problem. The third step is to focus your thoughts on something else that makes you feel good. It is when you release enough resistance that an idea, toward solving the problem, will come."

If you are finding it difficult to shift your thoughts, Kent suggests, "Take a nap to stop the momentum. It's the most powerful thing you can do. It's like a reset button."

And, remember, if you're feeling overwhelmed, it is always cool to ask for help.

*Robert Evans Wilson, Jr. is an author, humorist/speaker and innovation consultant. He works with companies that want to be more competitive and with people who want to think like innovators. Robert is the author of *The Annoying Ghost Kid*, a humorous children's book about dealing with a bully. He is also the author of the inspirational book: *Wisdom in the Weirdest Places*. For more information on Robert, please visit www.jumpstartyourmeeting.com.*