

How to Manage Worry Workbook

Worry is a normal part of being human and affects us all to some degree at some time or another.

However, the research shows that 86% of us would describe ourselves as 'a worrier' and it was found that the average person worried for 1 hour and 50 minutes every day. I find this shocking and so sad that so many people lose so much precious time to worry. This is made even worse by the fact that the majority of things we worry about never happen and the majority of worrying we do doesn't change a things anyway. All the time we spend worrying, robs us of enjoying the present moment and feeling good.

**'Worry does nothing but steal your joy and keep you
very busy doing nothing'**

Too much worry will

Keep you feeling tense and uncomfortable (permanent fight/flight mode)

Create a sense of fear of what is to come

Leave you feeling exhausted

Affect your overall happiness

Make sure you don't trust yourself to cope

My experience of working with hundreds of individuals is that worry can upset the equilibrium of your whole life, whether it is chronic or specific to a situation.

That's why I believe it is so important to learn to manage worries and not let them take control.

Worry thoughts are perfectly natural and normal but we can limit the impact they have on us and how long we spend on them.

Imagine knowing that no matter what situation arises in life, you have the ability to manage the worry it brings and be strong and confident through difficult times as well as through the day to day worries.

Let's get started...

'If you can't change a situation, change your mind'

www.emmaashford.com- The Members Club



Keep a Worry Diary

Worrying can just be a normal part of the way we think that we barely even notice. If it has become habitual and ingrained in the way you think we need to make some effort to begin to identify what is actually happening in your mind and your thoughts.

Keeping a worry diary for a day or even just a few hours will help you to start to become aware of the worry thoughts you have.

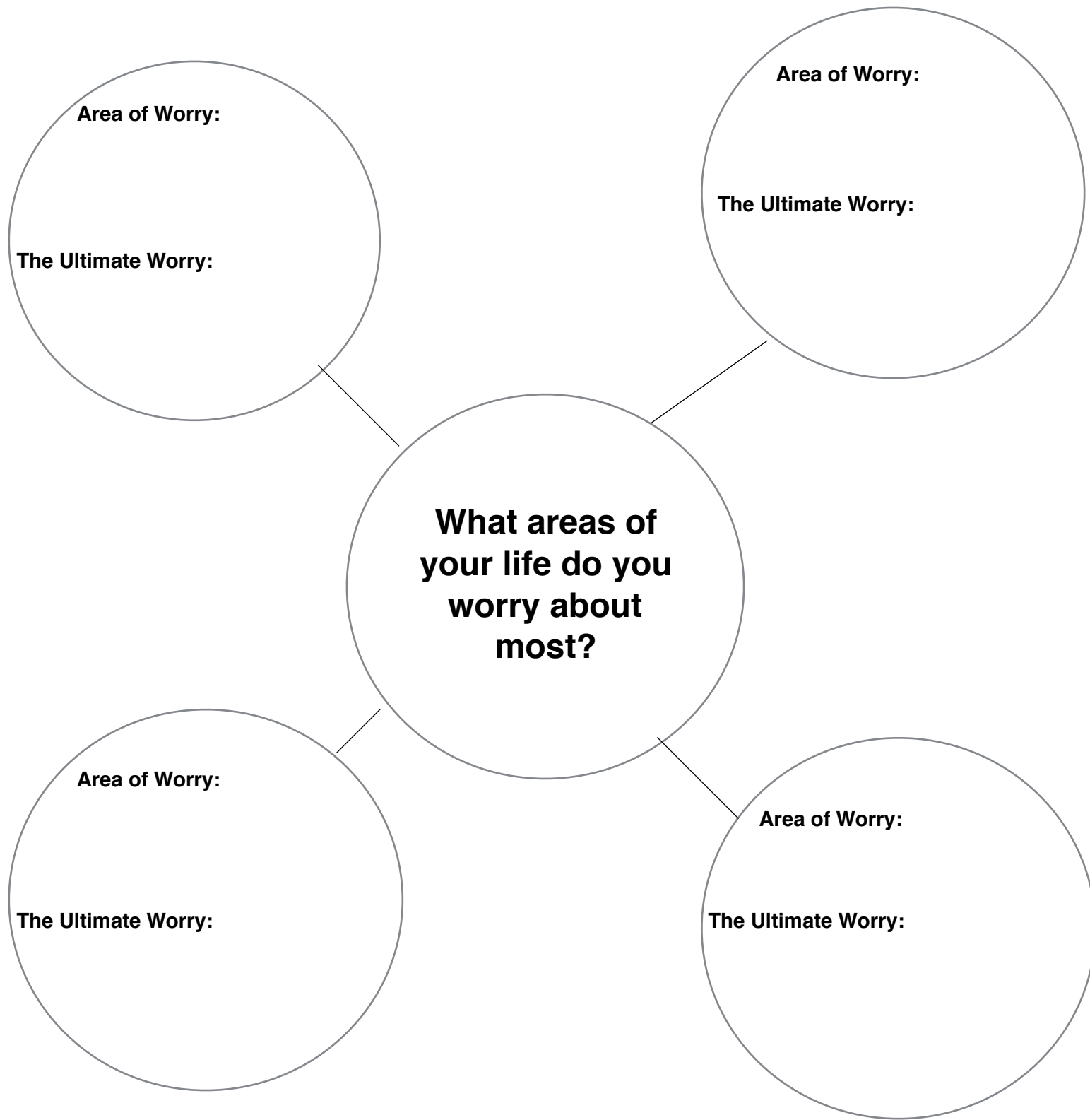
Try to jot down the worry thoughts you have. You need to be on the look out for thoughts that begin with 'what if' and playing out negative scenarios of what might happen in the future in your imagination.


What was the worry thought?	What physical symptoms did I notice?

'Most of the things you worry about never happen'



Now look back on your worry diary and use your general awareness to identify what areas of your life you worry about most. These could be things like work, relationship, health, children, sleep, being able to cope, your future etc. They are likely to be specific issues within these areas such as 'I worry that i will get behind on my work'. There is no right or wrong answer. Then try to identify what the ultimate worry in each of these areas is.






Identifying the ultimate worry in each area allows you to face up to the worst case scenario that your mind is ultimately afraid of.

Now for the ultimate worry in each area, identify some of the practical and proactive things you can do to prevent this from happening.

Ultimate Worry 1	Ultimate Worry 2
Ultimate Worry 3	Ultimate Worry 4

This will give you the positive actions to focus on and put your energy into rather than putting your energy into the imagined future scenario. You are choosing to control what you can and let go of what you cannot control.

‘I’ve got 99 problems and 86 of them are completely made up scenarios in my head that I’m stressing about for absolutely no logical reason’



It is very common for the Inner Critic to be playing a part in your worry and how you feel when you are worrying.

The Inner Critic will often say things like:

You can't cope

You are a failure

Your not good enough

You will be found out

You don't deserve anything good to happen

Is your Inner Critic involved in your worry? Jot down any thoughts here...

We know from the resources on the Inner Critic that you don't have to accept what it says to you. The most important thing is being aware of how it is linked to your worries and to challenge its input rather than just accepting it.

How do you tend to react to worries? Do you go over and over them in your mind? Do you eat or drink to try to distract or comfort yourself? Do you tend to beat yourself up? Jot down your reactions here....



Productive Vs Unproductive Worries

You must learn to distinguish between productive worries and unproductive worries in order to really take control.

Use these brief explanations to understand the difference between worries.

Productive Worries

- It is an answerable question
- Focus on a single event
- Not using physical sensations of anxiety as a guide
- Appreciation of what you can control and what you can't

Unproductive Worries

- It is an unanswerable question
- Focus on a chain reaction of events
- Intention of worrying until feeling less anxious
- Intention of gaining control of the future

Now go back to your worry diary and distinguish between which worry thoughts are productive and which are unproductive.

Aim to begin to recognise which type of thought each worry is when it comes up in your mind.

For any Productive Worries...

Productive worry thoughts can be useful if you turn them into a problem solving exercise.

What positive and proactive steps could you take right now to deal with this issue?

'Worry often gives a small thing a big shadow' - Swedish Proverb

For any Unproductive Worries...

Can it be turned into a productive worry if you focus down on the real issue that created the unproductive worry? If so, what positive and proactive steps could you take right now to deal with the issue? (as above)

If this worry is one that doesn't have any answers or exists entirely in the imagination (eg, 'what if' thoughts, worst case scenarios and chain reaction worries) we need to manage these thoughts to take away their impact on us.

These worries are just thoughts and spending your time and energy going over them will not have any impact on the outcome.

****Thoughts do not have any power unless we give it to them as thoughts are just things****

So, we need to create some distance from the thought to reduce its impact and power.

Complete the following phrase for as many of the worry thoughts as you need to.

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●


● 'I am having the thought that

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Using this phrase creates a sense of distance from the thought and allows us to become an observer to what is happening in the mind. These worry thoughts are not based on reality and are therefore not helpful.

Do this exercise as many times as you need to let go of the importance of the thought.

'Worry is a misuse of your imagination'



‘Worrying is like sitting in a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but doesn’t get you anywhere’ - English Proverb

Now you have created a distance from the worry thoughts you can put your focus in the most useful and enjoyable place - this moment right now.

Worry thoughts take us away from the present moment and what is reality so to overcome the worry we put ourselves back in the present moment and re-engage with reality.

What is the current reality of the situation you have been worrying about? Focus only on what is real and ignore anything that is only in imagination.

We can only ever live in the present moment as we cannot control the future and we don’t know what will happen until we live up to that moment in time.

In order to tolerate uncertainty, practice thoughts like:


‘There are no guarantees’

‘I don’t know for sure’

‘Anything could happen’

And commit to living fully in the present moment.

‘Don’t miss the sun today worrying about the rain coming tomorrow’



**‘Uncertainty is the only certainty there is, and knowing how to live with
insecurity is the only security’ -John Allen Paulos**

When you have been engaged in worry, your body has stored up all the same feelings of tension and discomfort as it would have if what you have been worrying about had really happened.

So try to treat your body with care and acceptance. Understand that those feelings are there for a reason but you want to try to help your body settle and feel comfortable again. This gives you something positive to focus on rather than engaging in those unhelpful reactions you identified earlier.

Perhaps you could try

Going for a walk

Having a warm bath

Listening to a relaxation audio

Breathing deeply

Asking for a hug from a loved one

Think about what works for you when trying to calm your body and jot your ideas here

Repeat the affirmation

‘I am capable and I can cope with whatever situation comes my way’

**‘Worrying does not empty tomorrow of its troubles, it empties today of its
strength’**

'Worrying won't stop the bad stuff from happening, it just stops you from enjoying the good'

At times when you feel overwhelmed with thoughts and worries try this:

An exercise to detach from and release thoughts

1. Write down each separate thought or worry on an index card or a post it note. Empty your head of all that's been overwhelming you.
2. Shuffle the cards or pieces of paper
3. One by one, read the thought or worry and then throw it into a waste paper basket or

I want to end on my favourite quote because I really feel like it sums up the power of learning to control your own worry

'I am not afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship' - Louisa May Alcott