

The two types of worries

Practical worries

Practical worries are about current practical problems. These are worries that are often about practical issues affecting you right now and for which there is a practical solution that could be taken. These types of worry usually happen less frequently, but need some action to be taken to solve them.

Hypothetical worries

Hypothetical worries are often about things that may be in the future and may not have a solution or action *right now* that we can take, no matter how hard we try to find one. For example: 'What if the plane crashes on the way to France next summer?' 'What if the bus to take me to the hospital is late tomorrow?' 'What if Dave falls out of love with me?' Or, 'What if I get a horrible illness when I am older?' Hypothetical worries may seem to be about practical things like relationships, flying or health, but **there is no action that we can take right now** about a flight next summer or even what may happen on the flight when that day arises.

When and how to write worries down

Each time you notice a worry in your mind, write it down in your Worry Diary. When you write down your worries, try and record them as the actual thoughts that go through your mind. For example, 'What if I get stuck in traffic and I miss the meeting?' or 'Will my daughter come home safely from school?' Write them down as soon as you can after the thought has gone through your mind if you can. Try not to leave a big gap between it happening and recording it. Some people have even recorded them into their phone or electronic device if they cannot write something down at the time, and then copied these onto the diary at a later stage.

Refocus on the present moment you are in

Once you have written down a worry on your Worry List, the next stage of the Worry Time technique is to refocus on the present moment. This means paying attention to what you were doing before you were worrying, or what is going on around you and the task at hand. You may find it helpful to get up and change room, go outside for a few moments and notice what is going on around you and what you can hear or see. You could start a new task or do something different than you were doing before your started worrying. Whatever helps you to refocus on what is going on around you in the present moment is fine.

If you worry at night

Many people find they worry more at night and this gets in the way of them falling or staying asleep. If this is the case for you, keep whatever you are using to record your worries and a pen next to the side of your bed. Then if you find yourself worrying at night write down the worry, turn

back off the light **re-focus on the present** (your soft sheets and warm bed) and try to get to sleep knowing you will come back to your worries later.

Your Worry e.g., 'what if	Practical (P) or Hypothetical (H)?	
	H	P
What if we are late for work?	✓	
What if Matthew rings in sick and the data run is late?	✓	
What if I have done something wrong?	✓	
What if I can't cope with the wedding?	✓	
What if Emma has an accident? I should have taken her.	✓	
What if the figures are wrong and I haven't checked them enough?	✓	
I am sure there is something wrong with me. What if I have a brain tumour or something else going on that the GP hasn't noticed?	✓	
What if I have missed something important?	✓	
What if Emma gets sick of me and leaves?		

The Worry Time technique

Worry Time is a strategy for managing hypothetical worries more effectively. In Worry Time you allow yourself to worry; in fact, you can worry as much as you like, for as long as you like, but only during a set time that you choose and are in control of. Outside of Worry Time, you refocus on the present moment and learn a way to let go of the worry, safe in the knowledge that you can come back to it and worry about it as much as you want in your Worry Time. Sometimes it can be hard just to let go of those hypothetical worries, even if they don't have a current or practical solution. Worry Time allows you to worry about things, but at a time that you are in control of, and in a tried and tested way.

Stage 1: Plan your Worry Time

How long you initially choose to have for your Worry Time is entirely up to you; you can review this after the first few times and see how long you need. For example, you may choose a worry period at 7 pm and decide that you will worry for 30 minutes, or even an hour. The time should be your decision. Whatever time of the day works for you is fine; however, this should be a time you set aside just for you to worry and you should not do anything else during this time but worry. Ensure that any potential distractions are reduced. For example, make sure that others are aware that

they should not bother you during this time, direct your phone to answerphone, and so forth. Don't do it when you are at work or when your favourite TV programme that you want to watch is on!

Stage 2: Now worry in your scheduled Worry Time!

Each day, when your Worry Time comes around, you are going to allow yourself to worry about the things on your list during the time you have set aside. Go through the list of worries you have recorded since your last Worry Time and choose one that you would like to start to worry about. Then worry about it! You can worry as much as you want about it. Then, when you feel ready to, move to the next and so on. You have as much time as you have set aside for your Worry Time to spend worrying about the things you have written down. If some of the worries that you wrote down are no longer a problem for you when it comes to your Worry Time, then put a line through them and let them go. Some of the hypothetical worries from the day may be more practical now: that worry about finding the venue tomorrow I can now plan, or that credit card I am worrying about whose interest free period is up I can look for another one tonight or schedule an hour in my diary for Friday morning.

At the end of your Worry Time, you need to refocus on the present and stop worrying about the things on your old Worry List; they now belong to your last Worry Time and you will start a new Worry List for your next Worry Time. To help to do this some people like to throw away their Worry List after their Worry Time, or screw up the paper and put them into the bin afterwards to help them let go! Always start with a new list and fresh paper each day so that you only focus on the worries that have happened since your last Worry Time. Worry Time takes practice and repetition, but is a really useful and effective technique to help you manage your worry.

Remember: Refocus on the present moment

It is refocusing on the present that helps you to manage your worries outside of your scheduled Worry Time. At the end of your Worry Time remember to refocus on the present moment and away from your worries, even if some of them still feel current. To refocus on the present, you may find it helpful to notice what you are doing or what is going on around you at that moment and tune your attention into it. Use your senses and be aware of what you can notice in that present moment, as that can help you. Getting up and doing something different or moving rooms from the one you have spent your Worry Time in may help. If your worries come back into your mind after your Worry Time, that's OK; just write them down on your new day's worry sheet to worry about again at your next scheduled Worry Time and refocus on the present again by focusing your attention using the strategies we have described.