

Living one day at a time, tackling one task at a time and living in the solution

For some people, anxiety is about catastrophizing about the future and their thinking might start off typically with “What if ...”

Living in this fearsome future is causing you anxiety, and some of that anxiety might be helpful (productive worry: you can do something about the problem and it is a real problem), but you need to bring it back to today. What can I do about it today? There may be nothing (toxic worry) and in that case, we need to practice acceptance. Alcoholics Anonymous end with this prayer after each meeting:

God, grant me the serenity,
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.

If there *is* something you can do about, then ask yourself: “Then what can I do about it *today*”. The next three lines of the prayer above are:

Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace

So, if you are feeling overwhelmed by a lot of ‘What ifs’, then start living in the solution: For hypothetical worries practice acceptance, let them go and get back to living in the moment. For practical worries: Prioritise them and deal with them. If it is big task (an Elephant) then break the problem into smaller tasks (Bitesize) and start dealing with your issue one day at a time, one step at a time one hour at a time etc. For example:

The overwhelmed position:

I also need to get more customers and pay my mortgage

I have to do my tax returns (and collect all my receipts and lots of other things)

I also need to ... (another problem)

Solution (What can I do?)

I will research tomorrow about getting a mortgage holiday

Tomorrow I will spend half-hour on looking at my advertising campaign and another half hour on Monday

I will spend one hour a week on my taxes and the other problem can wait to the end of the month (puts note in diary at the end of month to start tackling the other problem)

Start brainwashing yourself now by reading “Just for Today” daily for a few weeks, or take one (or more) of them you like and read them daily (put them one on your screen saver). Add your own affirmations to the list. Read them in the morning when you wake up. This puts you in the right frame of mind for the day. Read then more if you wish (at lunch break if you need a top up, when you get home from work and when you go to bed).

Just for Today

Just for today I will adjust myself to what is, and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my luck as it comes, and fit myself to it.

Just for today I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle my whole life problem at once. I can do something for 12 hours that would appall me if I felt I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

Just for today I will try and face my problems rather than avoid them, one day at a time, one step at a time.

Just for today I will end my “What ifs...” with “... then what can I do?”

Just for today I will change “If these bad things happen I won’t cope” to

If something bad happens, then what can I do?

When bad things happen I will cope with it somehow

When bad things happen, I’ll find a way to cope

When the future is uncertain, that is OK, because no matter what happens I’ll keep working toward my goals

Just for today I will live in the solution and not the problem.

When people have confidence in their coping abilities, they do not worry as much about potential dangers and mishaps and tend to take life as it comes, so follow your “What if ...” worries with “then what can I do?”