



Notice and Manage Your Worried Thoughts

When faced with stress or uncertainty, our brains are designed to focus on warning signs of danger. This “fight or flight” response makes us feel uneasy and tense. You can calm this stress response by identifying specific worried thoughts and focusing on more helpful thoughts instead.

Sometimes my thoughts are racing - how can I control them better?

Step 1: Identify your thoughts

Ask yourself: What would my worried thought say, if I wrote it out as a complete sentence? You can also try using one of these prompts: I won't be able to... My loved ones will... I fear that... I can't cope with...

Step 2: Examine the facts

Try to determine if your thought is fully true, partially true, or not really reasonable. Also, even if your thought is true, try to evaluate how helpful or productive it is.

Ask yourself: How do I know this is true? What is the evidence? Is there any evidence that this thought is not true? Even if this is true, is thinking about this helpful to me right now?

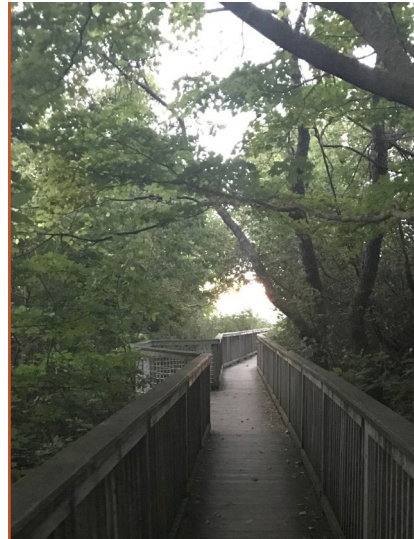
Step 3: Try to come up with a believable, but less worried thought

Ask yourself: What would I tell a friend who was having the same thought? If this worried thought came true, how would I cope?

Resources

More resources for managing worried thoughts:

- [Living with Worry and Anxiety Amidst Global Uncertainty](#): a free guide from Psychology Tools available in more than 20 languages
- [COVID-19: 5 Tips to Face Your Anxiety](#): interactive modules to help manage anxiety
- [TRAILStoWellness.org](#): handouts, worksheets, activities and videos on challenging unhelpful thoughts



“I am the master of my fate and the captain of my destiny.”

- Nelson Mandela

| Example worried thoughts about COVID-19 | More helpful coping thought |
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| <p>"I am going to get very sick or die."</p> <p>"Someone I care about is going to get sick and die."</p> | <p>"This virus is still very rare, much more rare than flu."</p> <p>"There are many important and effective steps people can take to protect themselves and stay healthy."</p> <p>"The vast majority of people who get this virus recover without becoming critically ill."</p> |
| <p>"I won't be able to cope with the emotional effects of this situation – the fear, sadness, or isolation will be overwhelming."</p> | <p>"I have experienced difficulty in the past. I am strong and can get through even very difficult situations."</p> <p>"I know many people who have experienced significant hardship and survived. I can reach out to them and learn more about what steps they took to get through it."</p> <p>"I can still communicate with my family and loved ones by phone, video calls, texts, emails, and even sending letters or packages."</p> <p>"I'm not alone – people all over the world are going through exactly what I'm going through right now."</p> |
| <p>"My family can't afford this situation – we are not going to be able to pay for anything."</p> | <p>"This situation is unprecedented. All branches of government are passing emergency assistance bills and putting other measures in place to help people get through this."</p> <p>"There are a lot of services working right now to help families pay bills, find food to eat, and keep their homes. I can learn more about these resources."</p> <p>"This won't last forever. It will be very hard to be financially unstable, but I am resourceful and have people I can turn to for help if I need it."</p> |
| <p>"I am failing at keeping up with all the demands right now: work, family, finances, household responsibilities, and more."</p> | <p>"I am doing the best I can right now. It's okay if I can't get to everything or if I make mistakes. This is not the time to be perfect."</p> <p>"Everyone is trying to juggle many responsibilities right now. I'm not alone in feeling this way. I can ask other people how they are managing and try some new strategies."</p> <p>"This is a totally new situation and it will take time to figure out how to make it work."</p> |
| <p>"If I leave my house, I will become sick. I am trapped."</p> | <p>"The best health information right now advises people that it is ok to leave their houses to get exercise, groceries, and other necessities."</p> <p>"I can leave my house to go for a walk, go for a drive, ride my bike, sit on my front steps, and just get fresh air. Getting out is good for my mental and physical health."</p> <p>"When I go out, I can take precautions and follow guidelines about how to be safe by staying over six feet apart from others, washing my hands regularly, not touching my face, and more."</p> |