



Be Pain Smart – Anxiety

Worry time

Setting aside some time to focus on how to resolve your worries can free your mind from them.

Worries are unhelpful thoughts that you repeat to yourself over and over again about something bad happening in the future. It is easy to get stuck and caught in your worries or trapped in unhelpful thoughts that can snowball and churn around in your mind, like you are in a washing machine on a continuous repeat cycle of unhelpful thoughts.

Unfortunately, worrying about a problem rarely helps the situation. You need to spend time problem solving, perhaps even with someone else, to really help the issue. This is where 'worry time' can help. This is time set aside to focus on and problem solve your worries. It sounds odd but making a time to worry can free your mind of being trapped in your worries all day and all night.

Follow the steps below to make your own 'worry time'.

Step 1. Make a time

Set a time each day when you will not be interrupted and when your pain is usually better – do not do this before bed.

Start with once a day and for 20 minutes at a time (if you cannot sit for 20 minutes, set a timer to change position). Put a reminder in your diary and phone. Make sure you have somewhere comfortable to sit and everything you need, like a pen, paper, or a blank copy of the '[My worry time worksheet](#)'. Once your worries are more under control, you can space your worry time out to a few times or even once a week.

Step 2. Pause your worry

Every time a worry comes up, just say to yourself, I am going to pause this worry until my 'worry time'. You can write the worry down on paper or in your phone to remind you later. Remind yourself that you have set aside time to worry about this later. Tell yourself there are other things you need to focus on now. If it is hard to shake the worry or feelings, try deep breathing or one of the ideas from the '[calming down](#)' or '[relaxation](#)' tools.



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Step 3. Use your ‘worry time’

When your ‘worry time’ arrives, sit down and think about the worries that you have written down. Some of them might not matter anymore, if so, just leave those. For the ones that are still bothering you, think about what is likely to happen, not what you think might happen. To work this out, ask yourself these questions.

What are you worried about?

What are some signs that your worry will not come true?

If your worry does not come true, what will most likely happen?

If your worry does come true, how would you cope? Will you be okay?

Now, has your worry changed? What do you think about your worry now?

Start by working on one worry at a time; this might take up the whole 20 minutes at first. It can be helpful to do this with a trusted family member, friend or carer.

Keep working at it because it takes time to feel comfortable and confident with this tool, but if you do it each day, you will notice that you are less trapped and stuck in your worries and this will make it easier to manage your pain.

Let’s work through a ‘My worry time worksheet’. Read the example below and then have a go yourself.



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My 'worry time' worksheet

Step 1. Make a time

My worry time will be:

Every morning at 10.00am for 20 minutes.

Step 2. Pause your worry

Say to yourself, 'I am going to pause this worry until my worry time.' Use deep breathing or ideas from the [calming down](#) or [relaxation](#) tools.

Step 3. Use your 'worry time'

What are you worried about?

I am worried about my finances. There seems to be more bills every day. I am struggling to pay the old bills and then new ones appear. I am worried that I will not be able to pay my rent. If I get evicted, I do not know what I will do.



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What are some signs that your worry will not come true?

My landlord is pretty understanding, and I have been a good tenant for three years, so it is unlikely that I will get evicted. I have a budget that I stick to pretty well, but I was not expecting the car to break down last week. I know the mechanic well and he said I can pay the bill off over a few months. Things will be tight, but I will still be able to pay my rent.

If your worry does not come true, what will most likely happen?

Most likely, things will just keep going on as usual. It will be hard to pay the mechanic – I will not be able to do much over the next few months, but I have got through worse before, so I am sure I will this time too.

If your worry does come true, how would you cope? Will you be okay?

If I got evicted it would be terrible because I love my unit and the area I live in. I guess I could move back in with my parents for a while to get me on my feet. Or Jim down the road is always looking for a housemate. I could move in with him. I would hate for it to happen, but I guess I could cope.

Now, has your worry changed? What do you think about your worry now?

Yes – for sure. I do not think I will be evicted. I now have a plan to pay off the mechanic. Each time this worry comes up I will remind myself of this plan.



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Now it is your turn to give it a go – work on your own 'My worry time worksheet'.

My 'worry time' worksheet

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My worry time will be:

Step 2. Pause your worry

Say to yourself, 'I am going to pause this worry until my worry time.' Use deep breathing or ideas from the [calming down](#) or [relaxation](#) tools.

Step 3. Use your 'worry time'

What are you worried about?



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What are some signs that your worry will not come true?

If your worry does not come true, what will most likely happen?

If your worry does come true, how would you cope? Will you be okay?

Now, has your worry changed? What do you think about your worry now?