

Dealing with Worry (Part 1)

The celebrated British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once said, "When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened."

These two quotes illustrate a large part of the problem with worry—it consumes huge amounts of time and energy that are totally unprofitable. We often realize too late that we will never receive tangible benefits in return for effort spent worrying. Anxiety cannot correct a past mistake, prevent a future calamity or supply us with anything that we don't already have.

For many, though, being anxious seems to just be an unavoidable part of who they are. Joanna Weaver, author of *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*, shares her personal story of being a "born worrier":

"I come from a long line of Swedish worriers. '*Käre mej*,' my Grandma Anna used to say over and over. 'Dear me, dear me.' Too high, too fast. Too much, too little. With all the potential danger in the world, there seemed to be only one response—worry. I remember lying in bed at night going over my list of fears. Somehow, as a young teenager, I had determined that the secret for avoiding trouble was to worry about it. In fact, I worried if I forgot to worry about something" (2002, p. 32).

While we may smile at Joanna's experience, worry is a main cause of concern for many people and they struggle to cope with it.

Worry and anxiety self-help tip #1: Accept uncertainty

The inability to tolerate uncertainty plays a huge role in anxiety and worry. Chronic worriers can't stand doubt or unpredictability. They need to know with 100 percent certainty what's going to happen. Worrying is seen as a way to predict what the future has in store, a way to prevent

unpleasant surprises and control the outcome. The problem is, it doesn't work.

Thinking about all the things that could go wrong doesn't make life any more predictable. You may feel safer when you're worrying, but it's just an illusion. Focusing on worst-case scenarios won't keep bad things from happening. It will only keep you from enjoying the good things you have in the present. So if you want to stop worrying, start by tackling your need for certainty and immediate answers.

Paul said "Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God .(Philippians 4:6)

Prayer:

Dear Lord,

I need you now because I am full of stress and anxiety. Reading your Word brings comfort, as I ask you to come and take my heavy burdens. I take each burden, one by one, and lay them at your feet. Please carry them for me so that I don't have to. Replace them with your humble and gentle yoke so that I will find rest for my soul today. I receive your gift of peace of mind and heart. Thank you that I can lie down tonight in peace and sleep. I know that you, Lord, will keep me safe. I am not afraid because you are always with me. Please keep me daily, Lord, in your perfect peace.