



What Type of Worrier Are You?

Recognizing the type of worrying you are doing can help you get out of the worry loop by understanding what steps you can take.

Mind Reading

When you find yourself worried about what someone else is thinking, you are mind reading. To fight this worry, you need to find the thing that you can control.

For example, you think Henry doesn't like you. You don't know this for sure because you can't read Henry's mind. So, what can you do? You can ask Henry if he doesn't like you. If you aren't willing to do that, you can decide that there is nothing you can do to change Henry's mind and move on with your life.

Focus on what you can control.

Fortune Telling

When you are worried about what the future might bring, you are fortune telling. There is no way that you can know what the future might bring because you aren't a fortune teller.

For example, you might worry that your company is going to have layoffs and you are going to lose your job and end up homeless.

Not only do we worry about the future, we usually expect the future to bring the worst possible outcome.

Cognitive Distortion— people have a tendency to worry about a future that is bleak.

Ask yourself how probable the outcome is. Think about the chain of events that would have to be true for the outcome to occur. In our example, first, your company would have to have layoffs. Next, you would have to be on the list of people who are being let go. That means that you have to either be a poor performer, or in a role that is no longer necessary. Then, you'd have to be unable to get another job. And you'd have to run out of money. And you'd have to have nobody else to go to. And, and, and.

Once you see that the probability is a tiny fraction, you can stop worrying about it.

The Shoulds

Worry about all of the things that you should have done. This means that you aren't accepting the present as it currently is. For example, maybe you catch yourself worrying that you should have been promoted by now.

Recognize reality as the place you have to start from. Then, determine what changes you need to make to get where you want to be.

What action can you take to move yourself toward promotion?

What If

Worrying about 'What If' scenarios that will never have a satisfactory answer.

What if I have cancer? You can get tested and still not trust the results.

Identify the best possible, most likely, and worst possible outcomes. Then answer each one. What would be the next steps for each?

Catastrophizing

Worrying that it will be so bad you can't stand it.

What would be the step you would take if that happened?

Overgeneralizing

Perceiving a general pattern of negatives based on a single incident.

Think of situations that don't fit the pattern

Personalizing

Attributing a disproportionate amount of the blame to yourself.

Who else was involved? Is there a need to place blame?

Want to Learn More?

Learn more about [Cognitive Distortion](#)

Read *The Worry Cure: Seven Steps to Stop Worry from Stopping You* by Robert L. Leahy

Listen to our episode on [Productive Worry](#)