

How Not to Worry: The Remarkable Truth of How a Small Change Can Help You Stress Less and Enjoy Life More by Paul McGee Book Summary

Worrying affect your health and happiness negatively and there is no other success. Therefore, it does not look very attractive.

However, you may not help yourself all the time. When you lie down in the evenings, your mind and heart compete with each other while you shaking. In the morning, the only thing left in your hand is bags under your eyes.

This is all related to an evolutionary process. In the past, our ancestors had to be awake for surviving because it was better to feel worried rather than encountering a tiger!

Unfortunately, our brain is not so good while distinguishing a meeting and a predator. Thus, stress becomes a common problem nowadays.

However, people can get rid of this vicious cycle thanks to Paul McGee, British life coach. He offers a basic, logical and effective ways to stress-free living in How Not to Worry.

Your brain becomes more reasonable with the huge contribution of well-structured small steps and you may leave behind your worries.

Your health is affected by the circle of worrying, anxiety, and stress.

Have you ever found yourself lying awake at night, fretting about an upcoming presentation?

Worries become out of control easily. The simple motto “Stop before you spiral” needs to be remembered to fight them.

Anxiety and stress are the next stages of worrying which is a part of a circle.

More clearly, worrying is a way of thinking that causes anxiety and stimulation of the body because of survival instinct. Physical reactions like heart palpitations, dilated pupils and tightened chest may appear under the category of stress.

Worry, anxiety, and stress are results of the feedback loop. Anxiety and stress are affected by worrying and also these can be reasons for worrying. Anxiety can cause worry and stress and also, stress can lead to worry and anxiety. The loop can appear at any stage.

To see how this works, take on of the author’s experiences.

During a holiday in northwest England, the author and his wife heard a dog barking that seemingly an aggressive dog behind the hedge. Couple’s “fight or flight’ response is triggered by fearing of a possible dog attack.

In other words, the barking caused stress and the fear of an attack caused anxiety. Their concern about finding a quick escape made them worried. On the other hand, the author was threatened by something unknown so his imagination is aroused and he thought that the dog did not have a leash or owner.

Once you get into this loop, it starts to affect the quality of your life.

There are lots of physical symptoms. For instance, the immune system declines so the body becomes more susceptible to illnesses or sex drives decrease.

Mentally, you get out of the area you need to make the right decisions because of the feedback loop. To be honest, stress makes you stupid by focusing on reacting to the frightening world instead of acting logically.

Above all, when you are in the feedback loop, you are away from enjoying the moment by focusing on bad scenarios. This leads to loss of your motivation and creative inspiration for the future.

Until now, we have seen how worrying is linked to stress and anxiety and now we will look at the causes of your worries.

Past experiences or fear of the unknown, face with the cause of your worries.

What makes worried you? Is it a performance review at work? Or making this month's rent? The root causes of worry are surprisingly simple while worry comes in different shapes and sizes.

Past is one the main reason for worry.

The childhood period is a conditioner for many worried people. 'If you do not want to die because of cold, you need to dress warmly' was reminded during winter by worried parents all the time.

There is even evidence that worried parents can transmit stress to their babies during pregnancy!

Another common cause of worry is painful experiences.

It does not matter, it might be a car accident or a bad relationship; your past shapes your coping abilities in the present.

Past experiences often increase sensitivity to potential danger. For instance, the author's daughter was bitten by a dog when she was three, so dogs become an exact reason for her anxiety ever since.

It means that being aware of your triggered memories which come from your past is one of the first steps for overcoming your worries.

One of the most powerful reasons for worry is fear of the unknown.

Life is unpredictable. Jobs, careers, and relationships are all disruptive for the future; however, stability, familiarity, and security make people feel more comfortable. Questions such as "How am I going to pay the rent?" or "Will I ever be successful?" are already difficult to predict for the future.

The unknown is worrying because it is out of your personal control. It is like that your destiny depends on others and you have to trust them.

Formula 1 drivers know all about this. The pit stop which means drivers are not in control for once is the most stressful part of the race because it depends on how others do their jobs.

However, there is no need to be Formula 1 driver to feel this stress. You can experience it in every uncertainty you encounter in life.

Luckily, you can find a way out by getting to know yourself better and asking questions about your worries. This makes you closer to a better point of view and making sense about your worries.

Your rational brain tries to get rid of your worries which come from primitive and emotional brains.

You can blame your brain's survival instinct if you worry about something.

Depending on their evolution, people perceive the danger and react appropriately. When infancy is spent by avoiding predators, this happens.

Worry is located in the *primitive* and *emotional* parts of your brain.

Let's start with the former.

'Fight or flight' stress response is controlled by the primitive brain which is located deep in the subconscious. Keeping you alive is its main work and also nutritional needs and sex drive are controlled by the primitive brain.

In stress situations, the emotional brain and the primitive brain work together. They release hormones like adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones cause increasing energy levels and feelings like anxiety, excitement, and fear.

Worrying is a survival strategy for these two areas of the brain. You become ready for fight or flight responses in the case of danger thanks to its insistence.

Of course, this would be more meaningful if you fight on the savannah. However, people are more likely to worry about the board meeting than to fight with predators in today's world.

However, emotional and primitive brains are not good at while distinguishing differences between the two. Because of their concerns, both are equally dangerous for them. Therefore, our body can react to daily events too. In short, these brains are really worried.

By contrast, the rational brain provides checking worries.

The neocortex, located in the higher brain, is responsible for complex tasks like memory and problem-solving. It allows you to evaluate your environment correctly and make sound decisions on the basis of that information.

When you feel out of control because of your worries, you can train yourself for using rational brain. Think about the time you overreacted in the past and ask, what would make a more logical one?

Take the author: One night he and his friend believed that there was a slug invasion in their garden and they salted them up. But they saw with daylight that they spent hours with leaves that are similar to slugs.

This is a great example. It shows how emotional brain works and affects people' lives. If they behaved more rationally, they would have waited until morning before they took an action.

Awareness is the first of three steps to start solving your worries rationally.

In this part, a simple technique for knowing yourself will be given. When you face a problem next time, you can try it.

Your self-awareness will increase with the help of this exercise. Basically, it is a way to reach the source of your worry.

Here's how you do it: Ask yourself "Where is my worry coming from?"

Then, distinguish your worries into three categories: situational, anticipatory or residual stress.

Situational stress is about events that are currently happening. It can be related to your health or caused by a conflict with your spouse or coworker.

Next, anticipatory stress is related to anxieties which come from thoughts about the future. For instance, an upcoming exam, presentation or interview can be cause for stress.

Residual stress is related to past experiences. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an example of a severe form of residual stress.

So what actually accomplishes the nature of your concern?

Well, it is better to categorize your worries to understand the source of stress. It detracts from anxiety and puts it in a better position to calmly ask yourself "Why do I feel this way?"

When you start doing that, you will understand things that bother you the most by using better perspective.

That is an important first step. Awareness means that you are already half way to solve the source of your anxiety.

To understand the root cause of your worries, analyze them.

First, the good news for you if you have come up here, you are on the right way to face with your worries.

Let's start by classifying the worries that are so funny to entertain. When you do that you will feel it is time to stop worrying about these worries and start doing something to change the remaining ones.

In the sorting process, you ask whether the root cause of your personal worries is historical, hysterical or helpful.

Historical worries reflect your past experiences. Let's say that one night you were robbed while walking home. If you feel worried about walking in a dark street after that, it will be quite normal. You can experience it from previous experiences.

It is pretty rational, is it? In contrast, the hysterical worry is exactly irrational. You have anxiety about shark attacks, plane crashes or getting an STD from a public toilet.

Finally, there is a form of rational behavior which is a helpful worry that caused by real problems like a performance review at work or end-of-year thesis presentation at university.

Your worries are separated into categories, now you can ask what you can do about them.

You need to take emotional support if you have historical worry and then move on.

In serious situations like childhood traumas and abusive relationships, you may have serious emotional problems. So, you should turn to a therapist, counselor, friend or colleague. Most importantly, you need to find an exit from these emotions.

When you let out your emotions, you do not only feel better. You also think more clearly about the source of anxiety that bothers you. More importantly, it lets you focus your attention on the future by leaving the old ones.

Hysterical worry means that your concern is conceptualized by cutting off your thought process by looking at the statistical results.

The data can be considered all the time. Being mauled by a shark, struck by lightning, murdered by an intruder or contracting an STD from a public toilet have an extremely low chance.

You can also question your own thoughts and see how often your estimates have come true. Not that often? Perhaps, it is best to focus on important issues by opening space within your head and putting the crystal ball away.

Helpful worries and what you can do about them will be considered deeply in the next chapter.

A Powerful tool for triggering and alleviating worrying: Your imagination

The old technique “imagine the crowd naked” is recommended often for relaxing while giving a public speech because it really works!

Your anxiety can be reduced thanks to your imagination as we see in this great example.

No wonder, the imagination is an important tool but it can also be the trigger for worry and stress.

Humans are quite unique in terms of triggered by the mind in compared to other animals. For instance, antelopes or whales are not affected by hypothetical events like humans.

In contrast, the human mind has the ability to imagine all sorts of scenarios. Imagine giving a train wreck of a presentation: you may spill your coffee or the slides may freeze, or you may forget your speech.

It is enough to think about humiliating experiences that make you feel anxious.

Therefore, the differences between real stressors in the present and imagined stressors in the future cannot be separated by the primitive brain. “Fight or flight” response is also given for hypothetical events like they are real events.

However, the imagination can be used for more productive purposes because it is a good helper to overcome worry and anxiety.

So, how do you use its positive powers?

Ask yourself how you can influence the outcome rather than thinking “what if” scenarios and their stressful outcomes.

Take a cue from a woman who went to the author for life coaching.

Anna had problems related to public speech like feeling shy, nervous and worried all the time. McGee directed her to determine a role model so she can imagine herself as while having a presentation.

Anna imagined herself as Madonna, who is a self-confident woman and performed in public a million times, in her next presentation and the cue worked. She became fearless and tackled her anxieties.

The other useful idea is that imagine four advisors who assist you in important areas like work, health, and relationships.

When you worry about a problem next time, you consult your assistants: 'Would the Dalai Lama say about this particular quandary?'

And remember, you do not have to be Madonna just because of Anna; you may want to be Barack Obama or Beyoncé. The reason why imagination is strong is that it is unrestricted.

Leave personal worry triggers and stop satisfying others, just learn to ask for help

Critics love anxieties mostly and you are probably your own critic. So you need to relax and take a load off.

Of course, it is easier to say but you can take action today with advice and effective methods.

Here's a good place to start: Stop putting yourself down!

You can think like that you wouldn't tolerate if someone else had criticized you. Well, why do you allow yourself just because you are the one doing that? Self-depreciation absolutely causes increasing your worries and anxieties.

That's why your problems become unsolvable. Self-doubt causes losing ability of understanding world rationally and making sound choices.

Imagine a professional athlete who says herself that she shouldn't try anything because she doesn't have any chance to win. Isn't it easy to see how it affects her performance?

Stop trying to please everyone around you is the next step.

Worries are often originated from personal relationships. People may lose sight of their own happiness while avoiding being criticized or rejected by their friends or families.

Imagine you are trying on clothes in a shop. Would you consider the appearance of the shirt or the ideas of your friends? Even if this is an insignificant example, the same mind can think in the same way while choosing your career, school or partner.

Finally, when you need help, you should learn not to try going alone instead of asking for help.

Many people, especially men, do not want to seem weak so they hide their worries, reject sharing, and try to solve alone.

However, this is only a temporary solution. You will feel good just for now!

When you are trapped in your worries, leave your pride and ask for help and advice. There are many people around to support you, whether it is a partner, counselor, boss, colleague or trusted friend.

Here is a way to get rid of your worry, stress, and anxiety. Time to stand back and have fun!

Book Review

The cycle including worry, stress, and anxiety affects your health and happiness in a negative way. You can overcome this feedback loop by analyzing the source and nature of your worries. Once you start separating them, you can solve useless worries and direct yourself to things you can really influence.

Go to the gym or take a walk to overcome your worries!

Exercise is the best thing for anxiety as a remedy. As blood pumping increases, circulation is accelerated and endorphins are secreted. This makes you feel calmer, cooler and – most importantly- happier. After that, you are ready to go over the problems rather than run away from them.

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