# Understanding worry

Why some minds worry more, and what keeps worry going.

Worry is a chain of "what if" thoughts about things that might go wrong. A little worry is useful: it helps us plan. Too much worry is exhausting. It jumps from topic to topic, is hard to stop, and rarely ends in a solution.

## Signs that worry has become a problem

- [ ] I worry about lots of different things
- [ ] Once I start, it is hard to stop
- [ ] I feel tense, restless or on edge
- [ ] My sleep is affected
- [ ] I find it hard to concentrate
- [ ] I am tired and irritable

## Why worry keeps going

### It feels useful

"If I worry, I will be prepared." "Worrying shows I care." These beliefs make it hard to put worry down.

### Uncertainty feels unbearable

Worry is an attempt to get certainty about the future. There is never enough, so the worrying carries on.

### It becomes a worry itself

"I am going to make myself ill with all this worry." Worry about worry adds a second layer.

### Avoiding and checking

Putting off decisions, over-preparing and seeking reassurance all give short relief and keep the habit strong.

## What helps

- Sorting worries into those you can act on and those you cannot.
- Giving worry a set time and place, instead of all day.
- Practising small doses of uncertainty on purpose.
- Bringing attention back to what is in front of you.

**Note**

Worrying is something you do, even though it feels automatic. That means you can learn to do less of it.

**My notes and questions**

© 2026 Patrick O'Hare Therapy · patrickoharetherapy.com

This handout supports your therapy. It does not replace professional advice.