

You Don't Have to Be at the Mercy of Your Worries

By Colin Clerkin

If there is one thing I can be totally confident about as I write this, it is that each of you reading this article knows what it means to worry. We all do it; many of us for more of the time than we'd actually want to, but we all do it ... and for most of us, it is just a normal part of our day-to-day lives. "Did I pay that bill?", "Am I going to get to the meeting on time?", "What will the neighbours think of me if they heard me shouting at the kids?" ...

I (or you) could fill the page with a list of the things we worry about. For most people, these are low-level, take-it-in-your-stride issues that pop into our heads, we resolve quickly, and then move on from. In fact, a little worrying can be a good thing, as it helps us to problem solve, keeps us on track with the things that we need to do within our family and work lives, and even ensures that we take reasonable precautions to keep ourselves safe in the world generally.

But for others, "simple" worrying thoughts lead to other concerns ("Oh no, if I didn't pay that bill, the gas company will cut us off"), which lead to even more ("If they cut us off, how can I keep the kids warm in this cold weather!"), and within a short space of time, they find themselves lying awake at night, worrying thoughts spiraling out of control about more and more things and imagining the worst ("They'll say I'm a terrible parent and take the kids off me!").

When our thoughts are allowed to race out of control in that way, we become caught up in unhelpful downward spirals, with worry building upon worry, with less and less capacity to see a solution; we wear ourselves down (and out) worrying excessively and unproductively, letting our thoughts create greater catastrophes, becoming more and more critical of ourselves and ending up feeling more and more dejected, angry and useless.

But here's the thing: excessive worrying doesn't get us anywhere. I'm sure that's not news to you, but sometimes it is necessary to be reminded of that fact. *Worrying for worrying sake serves no purpose!*

Which is why therapy for worrying and anxiety looks to equip sufferers to recognise and appropriately label their unhelpful thinking styles and worries, manage the physical arousal that worrying causes (those gut-wrenching, stomach-churning feelings, that racing heartbeat, those clammy hands) and challenge their negative thoughts with considered positive alternatives, reviewing the evidence that can help them dispute their unhelpful beliefs and adjust their behaviours into more effective and more useful responses that put *them* back in control of their thinking.

Beating anxiety and worry *is* possible, but it does take effort ... and that is where working with an experienced expert to guide you through the steps involved can be an important element in tackling your worrying. Having a knowledgeable guide enables you to work smart and be more effective more quickly in your efforts, increasing the likelihood that you will succeed sooner rather than later. And when you do, you can once again feel that sense of being in control of your anxious thoughts, rather than at their mercy.

If you think you or someone in your family would like the opportunity to work with me and have my support to overcome the challenges that they are facing with anxiety or some other emotional health issue at the moment, please don't hesitate to get in touch for an initial chat. You can **call me directly on 01244 677010** or Email colin@clerkinpsychology.co.uk

Thanks for taking the time to read this article. Please feel free to forward it to any family, friends or colleagues you think may be interested in its contents. And if you have thoughts, comments or questions, do please get in touch.

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