

Ward Off Worry in Five Easy Steps



We're a nation of worrywarts. The National Institute of Mental Health reports that anxiety is the most frequently reported mental health problem. Nearly 13 million Americans spend the better part of their day feeling anxious. That's a lot of worry.

What is worry, anyway? It is a stream of thoughts focused on the fear of what *might* happen.

Here's a five-step plan to minimize needless worry, developed by psychologist Thomas Borkovec, Ph.D., at Pennsylvania State University. The idea is to acknowledge that you have something worth worrying about, but limit the time you spend worrying to a reasonable level.

1. Identify your own symptoms of worry, like inability to concentrate, sweaty palms, or feeling as though you've got butterflies in your stomach.
2. Set aside a period of ½ hour every day for the sole purpose of worrying.
3. Write down a list of things that you plan to worry about during the assigned period.
4. Use your worry time as a problem-solving session, to work on solutions and remedies.
5. If you find yourself worrying at other times of the day, distract yourself by actively pursuing a chore or deliberately thinking about something else, or use thought stopping.