

Worry Too Much?

Here's How To Make A Worry Plan

Worry Can Be Especially Overwhelming For Caregivers

Uncertainty about the future can feel especially overwhelming and scary for all caregivers. You may feel as though you're constantly trying to predict and prevent the worst from happening. Over time, you may find yourself worrying more and more and becoming exhausted.

Why Do We Worry?

We worry to protect ourselves from something we fear. Because we can't see the future, worrying helps us anticipate a threat and motivates us to take action to stop it from happening. It may come up as a series of "what if" thoughts, like:

- What if they fall trying to get out of bed?
- What if they forget to take their medication?
- What if I pass on a cold or infection to them?
- What if they get injured or die if I leave them alone?

These are very legitimate worries. While thinking this way is normal, our responses to these worries aren't always helpful. We may worry even more or start to catastrophize, which can get in the way of important activities like running errands or falling asleep.



Benefits Of Creating A Worry Plan

Some worries are outside of our control—there isn't much we can do to stop that bad thing from happening. Often, by pinpointing actions we can take associated with that worry, it can make the situation feel a little more in our control. By asking ourselves “What will I do if ___ happens?”, we can come up with actionable steps to take. Although this won't make the worry go away completely, having a plan ahead of time with concrete steps can help you manage the worry and reduce its burden. It can bring a sense of certainty to something that feels unknown.

Steps For Making A Worry Plan

1. **Write down all worries you have.** You can use a notepad or a smartphone. You can even get creative and write each worry on a separate sticky note. This can help you get all the worries out of your mind so that you can work with them and focus on each one.
2. **Ask yourself what you can and can't control.** Consider what parts of this worry remain outside of your control. This can help you focus on what actions you can take for the parts you can control.
3. **Ask “What will I do?”** For each worry, write a list of actions that you would need to do if that happened (or what you realistically could do to prevent it).
4. **Take action.** Start with the ones you can do right now. If possible, schedule ones you can deal with later (or plan as far ahead for them as you can).



Examples Of A Worry Plan

What is the worry about?	What parts are in my control, and what parts are outside of my control?	Can I address this now?	What will I do?
"What if they fall in the shower?"	I can't control dad's poor balance. I can help make the environment safer, take precautions, help prevent his balance from worsening, and have an emergency plan.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange a bathroom safety assessment with an occupational therapist and get recommended equipment. • Ask dad to only shower when someone else is in the house. • Support dad to do exercises to maintain balance. • Purchase an emergency alert necklace in case he falls.
"What if they have to go to the hospital?"	I can't control my grandma's COPD. I can't control if she needs to go to the hospital. I can control how prepared we are for a hospital trip, how well I understand the signs of an emergency flare up, and how I communicate the emergency plan to other people.	Yes	<p>Make an emergency plan for COPD flare up symptoms that indicate an emergency (including a list of emergency numbers). Pack a hospital bag with important drug information, copies of relevant legal documents (like power of attorney), and clothing. Keep it somewhere accessible. Ensure others have copies of this plan in case I'm not with grandma.</p>

What is the worry about?	What parts are in my control, and what parts are outside of my control?	Can I address this now?	What will I do?
"What if they forget to take their medication?"	I can't control how my brother's dementia affects his memory and judgment. I can control how organized we are and what reminders we use.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase an automated pill dispenser with an alarm. • Call my brother at his medication time as part of our daily routine and ensure he takes them. • Check the pill dispenser once a week to monitor changes as his dementia progresses.