



## FamilyLifeConnect

# Managing your worries

Worry is a normal part of life, but constant worrying can leave you feeling distressed and overwhelmed. It may also cause some physical symptoms such as sweating, disrupted sleep, irritability, headaches, muscle tension, increased heart rate and faster breathing.

Constant intense worries can interfere with your work, friendships, family and hobbies.

There are things you can do to change how much you worry, but it's important to accept that some things in life are uncertain and some things you cannot change. By focusing on the things that you can control, and can change, you can develop a more realistic approach to your worries.

### It can help to write things down

The first step is to notice when you are worrying and note down what you are worrying about – on your phone or a piece of paper. At night, if your worries are keeping you awake, make sure you have a notepad next to your bed to jot them down.

### Worry time – you are being given permission to worry!

Schedule a set amount of time in your day to 'worry'. You could even put it in your day planner/diary.

Go through your list of worries and decide whether they are **practical worries** that you can do something about, or **'what if' worries** that relate to things that you are concerned might happen in the future.

Make sure you stay focused on the things you can change and not on circumstances or other people that you can't change.

The following page looks at ways you can approach your practical worries.





## Practical worries that we can do something about

Problem solving can help you find a realistic and achievable approach to your practical worries. It can help you to see that there are many possible ways to approach a problem, and to then decide what solution you will try.

Think about a current concern that you have been worrying about and try using this practical problem solving exercise to brainstorm how you are going to take control of your worries.

### Problem solving exercise

#### Step 1: Choose a worry that you are ready to work on

Write the worry or problem down.

Think about the details of the problem. Be specific, and aim to work on one problem at a time

#### Step 2: Change the way you think about the worry. What is the problem to be solved?

For example, the worry, 'I still haven't paid this phone bill' now becomes a practical problem that can be solved such as, 'I need to pay the overdue phone bill by the end of the week'.

Now you have given yourself some distance from the issue you have been worrying about – making it easier to manage

#### Step 3: Write down every possible solution to your problem and choose the most reasonable one

It might help to ask yourself:

- How likely is it that you will follow through on each solution?
- Do you have everything you need to be able to complete the proposed solutions?
- How do you feel about carrying out the solutions you've written down?
- Do you feel ready to take this action at the moment?

If you are having trouble making a decision, take the work you've done on your problem and ask for advice from a partner, family member or friend to see what they think. They may even be able to help you think about other solutions.

#### Step 4: Develop a plan – you may need to break your plan into mini-steps

Thinking about, and writing down these specific steps, can help you to follow through on your plan

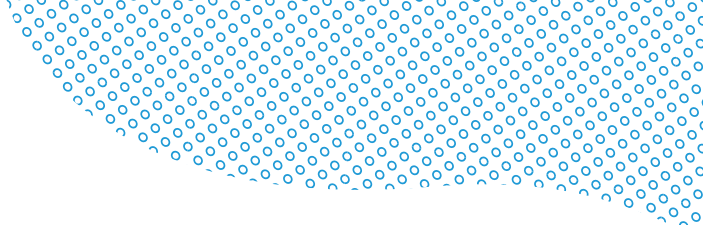
#### Step 5: Put your plan into action and review

Write down the outcome of your plan.

If your plan does not work out as you had hoped, remember that sometimes you have to try a few different things before you find the best solution.

Think about what you could have done differently and note your ideas down. This may help you when you try to solve a problem in the future.

Below is a blank template you can use to solve a problem.  
Use the exercise on the previous page to assist you.



**Step 1: Choose a worry that you are ready to work on**

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**Step 2: Change the way you think about the worry. What is the problem to be solved?**

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**Step 4: Develop a plan – you may need to break your plan into mini-steps**

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**Step 5: Put your plan into action and review**

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## Dealing with ‘what if’ worries

‘What if’ types of worries don’t have an immediate solution so there is no point continuing to stress about them. Try to let them go by accepting that these worries are not something that you can control.

It can be useful to ask yourself whether the worry is helpful to you. Ask yourself:

- Does it help me to be the person I want to be?
- Does it help me build the relationships that I would like?
- Does it help me take action to improve the situation and get my life back on track?
- Do you think there is anything to be gained from thinking about it now? When you last worried about this, did it actually eventuate?

These questions can often help you to accept that the worry is not something to focus on right now. Instead, think about what is helpful to achieving your goals.

## Once your ‘worry time’ is up, stop worrying and refocus on something else.

Throw your worry list for the day in the rubbish. Either start a new activity or go back to what you were doing before your ‘worry time’.

It can help to use mindfulness and breathing techniques to help you focus your mind on something else. For example, if you were gardening, really focus on the senses around you – what you see, smell, hear and feel in the garden – to get your attention fully engaged in this activity.

If you find your worries still creeping in, write them down on your worry list to be dealt with later, then try to refocus, even if it means starting something new.

These techniques have been shown to be effective in managing worries, so give them a try. You’ve got nothing to lose but your worries!

The **FamilyLifeConnect** service is funded by the South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network.



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lives for stronger  
communities*

The information in this document is general advice only. The advice within it may therefore not apply to your circumstances and is not intended to replace the advice of a healthcare professional.

### FamilyLifeConnect

**FamilyLifeConnect** is a free service that puts people living in the Greater Dandenong community in touch with mentors. They can support your wellbeing and help you achieve your goals.

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 **Book an appointment online  
at [www.familylife.com.au/familylifeconnect](http://www.familylife.com.au/familylifeconnect)**