mindhealth FACT SHEET

WORRY & OVERTHINKING · QUIETING A BUSY MIND

Worry & overthinking

When a mind that's trying to keep you safe won't switch off.



Endless "what-ifs"
One worry leads to ten more

Can't switch off
Replaying, planning, ruminating

In the body
Tension, restlessness, broken sleep

01 Two kinds of worry

Worry tries to solve the future in advance. Some of it is useful: it points to a real problem you can act on. Most of it is not: it circles "what-ifs" that have no answer today, giving the feeling of problem-solving without any of the progress. Overthinking is this loop running long after it has stopped being helpful.

02 Why we keep doing it

Worry feels productive, and now and then a worry "comes true," which fools the brain into treating all worry as protective. But churning the same thought rarely changes an outcome: it just drains today. The skill is sorting worries you can act on from worries you need to set down, and gently bringing attention back to the present.

03 What genuinely helps

- Sorting worries into "can act on" vs "can't control"
- A short, contained "worry time" rather than all day
- Taking one concrete step on solvable problems
- Mindfulness to unhook from the thought stream
- Protecting sleep, which worry loves to erode

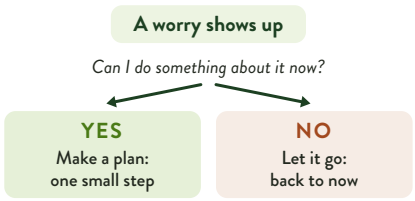
A PRACTICAL STORY

From spinning what-ifs to one small action



A SIMPLE TOOL

The worry tree



Ask one question. If you can act, make a plan; if you can't, practise letting it go and refocus.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Worry, sorted

1. Ask: can I do something about this now?
2. If yes: one small action
3. If no: refocus, and let it float by

Not every thought needs solving.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If worry runs most of the day, feels uncontrollable, or wears you out, that may be more than everyday stress. Ask your GP about a Mental Health Treatment Plan to see a psychologist.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1983 Tom Borkovec and colleagues tested worry postponement: saving worries for a set time each day.

Borkovec et al., 1983

THE KEY TAKEAWAY

You can't stop thoughts arriving, but you can choose which ones to pick up and carry.

Need support right now? Lifeline **13 11 14** · Emergency **000** — available 24/7. More options: **mindhealth.com.au/urgent-help**

TALK TO US WHEN YOU'RE READY

Parramatta and online, Australia-wide · **Book at mindhealth.com.au**

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