What to Do When You Worry Too Much

A Kids Guide to Overcoming Anxiety

Based on What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
For Parents and Caregivers

This is a book we use in school to help explain a child’s anxiety and give them the tools to help minimize their distress.

As parents or caregivers, you do all that you can – answering constant questions, avoiding stressful situations - often to no avail. The anxiety stays in control.

There is hope. This book helps teach you and your child a new way to think about and manage anxiety. The techniques in the book will help your child take control.

Changing these patterns takes some time. Remind your child to use the techniques. Use humour when you can. Stay positive, encourage all efforts in the right direction.

Sit with your child and read slowly out loud, look at pictures, and do the activities as directed. Read just one or two chapters at a time. Wait a day or two before moving on, as children need to absorb new ideas and practice new strategies.

The moment you present this book to your child, remember the power of positive thinking. Have faith in your child’s ability to grow strong against The Worry. Show an air of confidence. You are moving towards the day when you’ll be able to say that your child used to worry to much, but not anymore.
Chapter one

Are you Growing Worries?

Most things grow when you tend them.

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
Have you ever planted a tomato seed? If you cover it with soil, water it and make sure it gets plenty of sunlight, soon a little green shoot will appear.

If you give more water each day leaves and flowers will appear. And one day a tomato will appear. Keep tending your plant, more and more tomatoes will appear. Soon you’ll have so many you’ll need a cookbook.

Did you know that worries are like tomatoes? No, you can’t eat them. But you can make them grow, simply by paying attention to them.

Many children tend to their worries, even when they don’t mean to.

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
What started as a little seed of worry has become a **HUGE PILE OF PROBLEMS** that you don’t know how to get rid of.

Have your worries grown so big that they bother you almost every day?

Then this book is for you!

- Bad news - worries can grow fast and cause trouble.
- **Good news** - you have powers to make the worries go away....... **YOU DO.**

Keep reading and you will learn how.

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
What is a Worry?

Whatever name you give it, a worry is a thought that upsets you and makes you feel bad inside.

A worry can be a specific thought that makes you feel scared.

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
Such as: “Mum might forget to pick me up from football practice!”

Or: you might get a *Fluttery*, sick feeling in your tummy every day before school.

And you aren’t quite sure why you’re upset.

Everyone worries sometimes. It’s normal...

- Going to the doctor or dentist.
- A spelling tests.
- Meeting new people.
- When the lights are off, you’re in the dark.
- **MONSTERS** that don’t exist
- **No one** likes me!

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
Whether or not a worry makes sense to other people, it is real to the person feeling it. It’s great when a hug or something does the job and makes the worry go away.

But some worries don’t go away.

Children who have trouble with worries find that their worries get stuck.

Even if their mum or dad has never let them down, when they always do well in the tests they have taken and meeting new people usually ends in new friendships, the worries just go on and on.

If you’re reading this book, you’re probably the child whose worries get stuck.

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
Probably:
You have worries others don’t understand.
Your worries last longer than other people think they should.
People say “Don’t worry about it” all the time, but that’s not easy to do.

It isn’t easy.

But it is possible.
Once you learn more about worries you’ll be ready to start working on making your worries go away.

Draw something you worry about.
Chapter 3

How Do Worries Get Started?

What are they watching?

Based on What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
Seeing or hearing about something scary can make a worry get started. Watching POLICE SHOWS or MOVIES WITH BAD GUYS or the NEWS can make kids think that something bad could happen to them.

Sometimes bad things really do happen, like someone or a pet die. Parents get divorced or your best friend stops liking you.

When something scary or sad happens, or when you hear something that might make you think bad things will happen, this is how worries get started.
Difficult or disappointing things happen to everyone from time to time. Many children feel bad for a while, and then they think of things to look forward to help cheer themselves up. Some children are good at finding ways to solve their own problems. These children often have someone to talk to, and then they feel better. But some children – a lot like you – might try doing all these things and they still up worrying.

Sometimes children who worry a lot have someone in their family who worries a lot. The tendency to worry is something you can be born with, just like you are born with a certain eye colour or you can roll your tongue.

List the people you know who worry a lot.
Some people think that worries are
ALL IN YOUR HEAD,
but they
are not!

If you are a child who worries a lot, you know your worries can make your body feel bad. Worries can cause a sick feeling inside. Your tummy and/or your head can hurt. They make you sweaty and even cause your heart to pound. Worries can make you feel shaky or dizzy, like you might faint or vomit.

Actually, some children don’t realise that these bad feelings are caused by their worries!
Circle the words that describe how you feel when you are worried.

headache  nauseous  dizzy  racing heart  tingly  cold  weak  tearful  breathless  sweaty  stomache  faint

Put an X on the parts of your body that hurt when you feel worried.
No one wants to have lots of worries. It isn't any fun, and it can make your body feel bad. Did you know that worries can cause other problems, too?

Children who worry a lot often feel best when they are next to their Mum or Dad or someone else they feel safe with. They avoid things like:

SLEEPOVERS.
PLAYING AT FRIENDS’ HOUSES.
FIND IT HARD TO GO TO SCHOOL.
FALLING ASLEEP ON THEIR OWN.

Children who worry a lot have trouble doing things that other children can do more easily. Which means they often miss out on the things that other children get to do.

Even worse, children who worry a lot find that grown-ups can sometimes be cross with them.

Mums get ANNOYED when you ask them the same question over and over.

Dads get TIRED and GRUMPY when you can't get to sleep on your own.

Teachers get FRUSTRATED when your tummy hurts.
Has someone got MAD at you for problems caused by your worries?

Draw a person looking mad.

Well, enough about the bad news about worries. Now let’s talk about to make your worries go away.
Chapter 4

Making Worries Go Away

Based on What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
The first thing to do when you have a worry is put it into words. You can talk to yourself. Or find someone you like and trust, like your family, to talk about whatever the worry is.

Then use **LOGIC** to make the worry less powerful.

**What is Logic?**

**Logic:** is when you think about what is really true instead of what you’re afraid of.

**Logic:** reminds you that really bad things don’t happen very often.

**Logic:** is knowing that even if something a little bit bad does happen, you can get through it.

When you use **Logic**, you can make a plan that helps you feel calmer and less worried.
Ok, so let’s pretend you are afraid of DOGS because you think that they might jump up and bite you. You get asked to new friend’s house to play, you probably start to worry straight away.

**What if: she has a dog?**

: her dog bites me?

Before you start worrying try use.....

**Logic - Think**

She might not have a dog! So, asking questions and getting answers can save a lot of time and worry.

**Find out: Does she have a dog?**

Then you can let her know ahead of time that dogs make you nervous. Maybe your friend can hold on to the dog while you get to know it and see how gentle it is. Or maybe the dog can be put somewhere while you are there.

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
Write down one of your worries.

1.

Now ask yourself:

What can I say or do to feel less worried?

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
Sometimes, even when you’ve used *Logic* and worked out a plan, or even after family have tried to reassure you, the worry just stays in your mind.

When this happens, it’s time to think about tomatoes.

Based on *What to Do When You Worry Too Much*. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
Chapter 5

Spending Less time on worries.
Remember how worries can be like tomato plants? You check your tomato plant every day, and water it, and check it for little bugs, that you pick off. So, by looking after it you are helping it grow.

It’s the same with worries when you think and talk about them over and over, you are helping the worries grow, too.

What happens when you ignore your tomato plant by never giving it water and never checking on it? It will start to wilt and eventually die.

It’s the same for worries. If you don’t spend time on them, they will begin to get smaller and go away.
If you are a person who worries about lots of things, try setting up a **WORRY TIME**.

Your mum or dad can help you choose a certain time each day for **Worry Time**. **Worry Time** should last about 15 minutes.

Your mum or dad will sit with you during **Worry Time** to listen to the worries you have. This should be a peaceful time so no TV, no phones, no interruption from the rest of the family for any reason.

**Worry Time** is the time you can be really, honest about you worries. This your special time, your mum or dad will listen and try to help.

Create a sign for your **Worry Time**.
There is just 1 very important rule to **Worry Time**:

If a worry bothers you during the day, you’re not allowed to spend time thinking about it or talking about it until **Worry Time**.

If a worry comes into your head and it’s not **Worry Time**, imagine a strong box. Close your eyes. Can you see the box in your mind? Make sure it has a lid and a strong lock. Then imagine yourself putting your worry in the box and locking it. Remind yourself that you can deal with the worry during **Worry Time**, but for now you are leaving it in the box and walking away.

Get busy with something else.

Why don’t you draw your own Worry Box? Where you will store your worries. Remember make it strong with a lock and key.

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
If you ask a worry question or tell a worry to your mum and dad and it’s not **Worry Time**, your mum and dad will tell you to put it in the **Box** until it’s **Worry Time**.

Your mum and dad will **stop** answering your worry questions and stop reassuring you about your worries unless it’s **Worry Time**.

This might seem a bit mean. But when you are feeling worried mum and dad will say, “Oops! That’s a worry. Lock it away in your box! ” or “ We can talk about that during **Worry Time**. ”

It might feel hard to wait, but really it is for the best, because talking about worries and answering worry questions all the time is like watering a tomato plant every day. It’ll actually make your worries grow like crazy!
After awhile, you will find that by the time you get to **Worry Time**, some of the worries will have gone away. You’ll open up your imaginary **Worry Box**, and it won’t be as full as you expected. The silly worries – those things you already know but keep asking about again and again – these worries will disappear if you stop paying so much attention to them.

Your **Worry Time** will change. At first you’ll have tons to talk about, lots of little worries. Then little worries will go away, and you can use your **Worry Time** for the bigger things on your mind.

After awhile, you’ll find that there aren’t big problems to deal with every day. Your **Worry Time** will be come a chat. Keep spending 15 mins with your parents, but when that time isn’t filled with worries. **Give it a new name like.**

**TALK TIME.**
Chapter 6

Talking Back to Worries

I don’t think so!

Go Away!

Buzz OFF.

Scram!

Nope!!

You’re Bugging me, now!

Based on What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
You’ve probably noticed it’s hard to get rid of worries they just keep popping up, no matter how many times you put them in the Worry Box.

It’s frustrating, isn’t it?

But guess what? There is something you can do. Learn to talk back to the worry to make it go away.

You probably already know how to talk back. It’s when you stand up for yourself, when you don’t like what’s going on.

Some kids talk back to their parents, and that’s not a good thing because they are there to help you. But talking back to a worry is a good thing, because it’s giving you a hard time. The worry is being a BULLY.

Use your imagination to picture what a bully looks like.

Is it a mean, ugly creature with smelly breath and long claws that sits on your shoulder and whispers worry thoughts in your ear? Or perhaps a dark blob, like a cloud person who keeps raining worries down on you?

NOW: Draw what your worry bully looks like.
Do you want a bully hanging around?

**NO!** The only problem you have is that the worry bully is stronger than you. It knows it, and you know it.

But guess what?

You can get stronger.

You can learn to talk back to the worry.

You can learn not to give in to it.

You can make it *get off* your shoulder and *go away*.

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
There are a few things you need to remember.

The first is this:

Worry bullies like to trick you, so they exaggerate and lie. Worry bullies want you to believe that awful things will happen, when really that awful thing is unlikely to happen. So, keep that in mind. You can't trust a bully!

In the past, the worry has made you afraid. But now you know how they work. They lie to make you scared.

How do you feel about that worry bully? Are you mad at it? If you are mad, good! Feeling mad can help you feel stronger. It makes it easier to do what you have to do next. You need to talk back.

Turn your head towards your shoulder and tell the worry bully to **GO AWAY**. You can say it in your head or say it out loud, but say it like you mean it, in a firm voice. Tell it ....

I don’t believe you!

Leave me alone!

That’s rubbish! **Get lost.**
Think what would you say to your worry bully on your shoulder. Write them down.

Talking back to worries is a good thing to do because it makes you more powerful. It makes the worry weak, and you little stronger.

Try it again. Tell it to **GO AWAY.**

Imagine it’s on your shoulder, flick it off and think of it falling to the ground. Squish it with your foot showing that you mean business.

Then get busy doing something else. Go play, watch TV, or ask your parents what you can do to help.

The worry bully might still talk to you. It wants you to pay attention. Pay attention to something else instead.

**Make a list of things you can do while you are ignoring the worry.**

**Mum and dad can help, too.**

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
When you first begin to talk back to the worry, it’ll probably bother you again quite quickly. After all it see you as weak, and he knows that you’ve always listened before. So, it’ll probably try to climb back on your shoulder.

Practice talking back. **Go Away** and mean it.

Work hard to get busy with something else so there is less room in your mind for the worry.

Your mum and dad can help, too.

When parents reassure you over and over again about a worry that’s got stuck in your mind, they’re actually helping the worry to be in charge.

Once you start talking back to a worry, your mum and dad should stop answering the questions about the same worry. Instead, they need to remind that the worry bully is back on your shoulder, whispering in your ear.

Your mum and dad can remind you to talk back to the worry. They can help you tell the worry to **Bug Off.**
Chapter 7

Re-setting Your System

Based on What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
Sometimes kids tell the worry to **BUGG OFF**, and then they try to play or think about something else, but the worry has already made their whole body feel bad. You can still be in charge because there are lots of ways to make your body feel good again.

When a worry has made your body feel bad this is when we can do something called “re-setting your system.” This means doing something to change the way your body feels.

There are two ways to reset your system.

1. **be Active!**

2. **RELAX**
Activity:

When you are worried, things that you can not see change on the inside of your body. Your heart starts to beat fast and your tummy might start to hurt. This is not dangerous, but it feels bad. To get things back to normal on the inside, you need to get rid of some energy that is making your body feel strange. The best way to this is to get involved in something fun and active.

Try running up down the stairs before someone else can count to 100.

Roll up a sock and play catch indoors with someone in the family.

Hop on your bike and cycle around the block.

You might not feel like running around because you feel yuck and really low on energy. But being active will help to reset your system and make you feel ok again on the inside. So talk back to the worry and then get moving.

Draw or make a list of all the fun and active things you can do to reset your system.
Relaxation:

When worries come in the car or at school, or if it’s bedtime or some other time when you can’t get active, you can reset your system in a quieter way. This is called relaxation.

Relaxation means more than just taking a breath. You’ve probably tried that, and you know that doesn’t work. When a worry is jumping around inside you, your brain and your body feel awful. It’s hard just to calm down.

But get ready. You are about to learn a special, quiet way to make your brain and body feel better.
Let's take it one step at a time, beginning with your body.

Begin by tensing and relaxing your muscles.

Squeeze your fists.

Make your legs stiff like boards.

Scrunch up your face.

Keep your body tight while you count to 5 in your head.

Then relax your whole body by letting your muscles go loose.

Based on What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
Next think about your breathing. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

With each breath, picture the air going in your nose and travelling all the way down towards your tummy.

When you’re ready,

breathe out through your mouth.

As you breathe in,

feel the calm, cool air filling your body.

As you breathe out,

feel the tense, hot air leaving your body.

In......... and out.

In......... and out.

In......... and out.

In......... and out.

In......... and out.

Five times altogether.
Now that your body is ready, let’s think about your brain. When you’re worried, thoughts about the worry take up all of the room in your mind. These worry thoughts keep you feeling bad, even if you have already tried to relax your body.

People might tell you to not think about a worry, but as you know, that is really hard to do. It’s like the worry is being shown on a large TV screen in your brain. You can’t not watch.

But, you **CAN** change the channel.

You already know how to change the channel on the TV. Now you’re going to learn how to change the channel in your mind.
Begin by choosing a memory.

Choose a Special memory.

Special memories are usually happy times, fun times when we succeed at something (like sport or dance). When you chose your puppy!

Think of a memory that makes you feel really good inside. Remember everything you can. What were you wearing? How did the air smell? What could you hear? How did you feel? What did you see?
Draw or write about your special memory.

You may have more than one.

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
When you practice remembering your special memory, you’ll notice that a memory makes you feel better. Just thinking about it’ll help you feel the way you felt on that day. It takes practice, but soon you’ll notice that you don’t just remember feeling happy or excited or proud, you actually feel that way.

And guess what? Feeling happy or excited or proud soon crowds out the worry! It changes the channel off a worry station and onto one you’d much rather watch.

Set aside 5 minutes each day to practice this quiet way of re-setting your system. In the beginning, practice at a time when you aren’t busy worrying.

Get your body ready tightening and relaxing you muscles. Breathe deeply 5 times In....and out (in through your nose and out through your mouth).

Then picture your favourite memory in as much detail as you possible can.

The Active way of re-setting will work quickly. The Relaxation way will take more practice but you’ll find it works too. Take time to practice so when your worry comes you’ll have a choice.

How do you want to feel?

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
Chapter 8

Keeping Worries Away

Based on. What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
Now that you know a lot about worries and know how to get rid of them, there a few things you should know about keeping worries away.

The first thing you need to know is that worries have a way of sneaking back up on you.

If you are someone who tends to worry, you’ll need to be ready to use your worry-fighting techniques whenever worries begin to bother you.

Taking good care of yourself helps to keep you strong for fighting worries. Make sure that you eat healthy foods and get plenty of sleep. It’s harder to fight worries when you’re tired or hungry.

Keep your body strong by getting exercise every day. Play sport. Walk the dog. Run around with your friends and family. Use your muscles every day, and body will have more energy to fight worries.
Think how good you feel after a game of tig or an afternoon at the park. One of the reasons you feel good is that exercise helps get rid of all the pent feelings we have. It’s called stress, and it can build up when we feel rushed or when we have worked really hard to understand something. Also, when someone is mad at us we feel stressed or when lots of new things are happening all at once.

When we are stressed, we feel more tired and grumpy. Exercise is a good way to get all the stress out so that our bodies and minds can be strong.

Keep Busy.
What do you do to take of yourself?

Draw or write about it above.

Based on What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
Do you remember that worries are like bullies who pick on weak people?

To win the fight against worries, you need to be strong not only in your body but also in your mind. One way to be strong in your mind is to know that you are good at something.

Maybe you’re a good friend.

Maybe you get good marks in maths.

Maybe you are good at sport.

Maybe you are good at drawing.

Maybe you have a lovely singing voice.

Find something that you are good at, and then do that thing. Be proud of yourself for what you are good at. And talk to adults about the strengths in your life. We all have different things that we are good at.

When you know that there are things you’re good at it will help you feel more confident that you can learn to be good at fighting worries.

Draw yourself doing something you are good at.
Chapter 9

You Can Do It

Based on What to Do When You Worry Too Much. Adapted by Joy MacKenzie, PSO, Gilmerton P.S.
How To Beat Your Worries

Use logic against worries.

Lock up worries in the strong box in your mind.

Make worries wait for Worry Time.

Move your body to re-set your system.

Relax with a favourite memory.

Stay strong in your body + mind.

Now you are stronger you know what to do.

P.S.
Now that you are stronger, fighting worries will be easier. You can be kid who isn’t bothered most of the time by worries.

Imagine yourself as that kind of kid.

Imagine yourself being strong enough to tell your worries to go away.

Imagine the worries actually going away.

**Now: Draw yourself without your worries.**

**It is going to feel good!**