

Happiness – 10 Tips for Overcoming Worry

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THE HAPPINESS INSTITUTE

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Introduction



Many people over the years have claimed to have found **the secrets to happiness**. Not many of them have had any sort of formal training in the understanding of human thinking and behaviour. Yet many of these have made lots of money selling products and services which have not always proven to be of great benefit.

Before founding The Happiness Institute I spent approximately **15 years studying psychology and completing three degrees**. I've written two books and several research papers. I've treated over 1,000 individuals with common problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, insomnia and all sorts of chronic, sometimes terminal, health problems. I've also worked with numerous organisations helping them maximise the productivity of, and manage staff.

I can honestly say that I know what makes people distressed but just as importantly, I've also learned what makes people happy.

Not many others have had the education, training and experience that I have and I'm proud to say that I'm now at the forefront of the exciting, new "positive psychology" movement.

Tip 1

“Set aside a worry time.”

Some people find it difficult to stop worrying. Worry tends to intrude into their mind at all times, interfering with work or other activities. A useful way of dealing with too much worry intruding in one's mind is to set aside a "worry time". This can be, for example, half an hour just after work. At any other time, when a worrying issue comes to mind, acknowledge to yourself that you need to think it through, and note that you will do so during your "worry time". At the appointed time, think the issue through and try to use one of the approaches below. Before then, give yourself permission to put it out of your mind and to get on with the task at hand.

Tip 2

“Ask yourself - Is the problem solvable?”

Worrying partly functions as a problem solving process. It alerts us to the possibility of something bad happening, and motivates us to come up with solutions to avoid bad outcomes. However, worriers often find it difficult to stop worrying because they attempt to solve problems that are not immediately solvable. So, during your worry time, the first thing to ask yourself is whether your worry involves a solvable problem or not.

Tip 3

“Be realistic.”

Even if the problem is solvable, ensure your expectations are realistic. Worriers also find it difficult to stop worrying because they keep trying to solve a problem to perfection. This is rarely possible. So, when you are trying to solve a problem, make sure that you aim to find a reasonable, rather than a perfect, solution. Worriers are very good at thinking of all the reasons why a possible solution would NOT work. They are not very good at thinking of any reason why a possible solution WOULD work. So, when you are trying to problem solve, make sure that you evaluate possible solutions in a more balanced way, not only paying attention to what may go wrong, but also to what may go right.

Tip 4

“Be aware of unhelpful thoughts.”

One main reason why problems and solutions seem so bad is that when we worry, we tend to overestimate two things. First, we tend to overestimate how likely it is that bad things will happen. Second, we tend to overestimate how bad they would be, should they happen. Remind yourself of all the previous times when you worried about something that did not eventually happen. Try to become more realistic in your assessment of the likely outcomes. This does NOT mean being unreasonably positive; just being more realistic.

Tip 5

“Be your best friend.”

If you find it difficult to look at your negative thoughts objectively and challenge them to be more realistic, imagine that you are your own best friend. Think about all the negative things that you are thinking or saying to yourself: "I'm such a loser. I never get anything right. I might as well give up now (etc.)" If your best friend was saying these things about themselves, what would you say to them? How would you challenge their negativity and self-criticism? Now remind yourself to be your own best friend and challenge your own negative thinking the same way.

Tip 6

“Use your heart as well as your head.”

Sometimes problems are not immediate solvable. During those times, it is important to use “emotion-focused”, rather than “problem-focused” coping techniques. In other words, stop trying to solve something that is not solvable and learn to cope with it.

Tip 7

“Keep calm.”

Because worry tends to be so pervasive, worriers often experience chronic irritability, muscle tension, concentration difficulties, sleep problems, indecision and agitation - as if being “on edge” and unable to relax all the time. It is crucial, therefore, to make sure that occasionally you make a conscious effort to relax, even if for only a few minutes a day. There are a number of effective relaxation techniques, and physical exercise is also one of the best options.

Tip 8

“Be mindful.”

A relatively “new” technique that has been shown to be very useful to reduce worry and anxiety is "mindfulness". It is, of course, not new; rather, it comes from very old Eastern meditative traditions. One of the main points of mindfulness is that one tries to pay attention to the present moment. In order to worry, your attention needs to be focused on the future. If you successfully focus your attention on the present, you will find that your worrying stops. There are a number of good introductory books available on mindfulness that you may like to try.

Tip 9

“Don’t forget to sleep.”

Worry tends to interfere with sleep. In fact, most people do most of their worrying at night, while trying to fall asleep. This is of course a very unhelpful habit, and may lead you to lie awake for hours, worrying about not being able to sleep! It is best to remind yourself to worry only during your “worry time”, and to use bedtime as your time for relaxation and recuperation.

Tip 10

“Don’t think you have to do it all on your own!”

Having a few friends to have fun with and to help you through difficult times is very important. Make sure you keep in touch and have “time out”. However, it is also important to make sure that those times are not spent with you worrying and so not being able to enjoy yourself. Make sure you remind yourself of your “worry time” and enjoy your “non-worry time”, paying attention to the present moment as much as possible.

Summary

Worry is a common problem, one that many of us will experience at some stage in our lives and one that works against happiness. At the same time, however, it is a problem that can be overcome. There's no reason why you should put up with worry or even settle for "okayness". Happiness is achievable if you know what to do and then do it.

Find Out More ...

All of the ideas you've just read are described in more detail in my book, [The Happiness Handbook](#), and in my specially designed [happiness workbooks](#). They are also integral to our [coaching and courses](#), including our exciting new 90 day online happiness program.

These products are all available on our website so if you're interested in finding out more just click here: www.thehappinessinstitute.com/products.

You can also read more about our coaching and courses (including our online options) at www.thehappinessinstitute.com/events.

And finally, you can sign up for our eNewsletter on our home page at www.thehappinessinstitute.com. It's free and full of great ideas (such as tips and quotes, book reviews and the latest research) to help you live a happier life.

More about ...

THE HAPPINESS INSTITÜTE

The Happiness Institute was established in 2003 with the specific intention of making individuals, couples, families and organisations happier.

Based on my years of experience I've developed a range of services and products specifically designed to address the issues described above. You can find out more about our coaching services at www.thehappinessinstitute.com/events but the most relevant solution to the aforementioned issues are our unique and specially designed happiness workbooks.

These address themes such as clarifying your life goals, optimistic thinking, identifying and utilising your strengths and building happy relationships.

And we know they work. Here are some comments clients and participants have made:

“They have really honed in on the essential elements required for finding one's happiness and the programs provide practical and effective advice on how to apply these elements...I've always come away from the sessions feeling very positive...One hour sessions that provide a lifetime of value.”

So if you'd like our help to learn the CHOOSE strategies and live a happier life, visit our website at www.thehappinessinstitute.com and view our “products” section.

You can also contact one of our expert team at:

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Can we help you?

Here are some of the things that people say about our products & services:

“They (the workbooks) are fantastic. A really excellent resource. I want to send them to umpteen friends and family. Congrats on a great format, concept and writing style. They are just the right size and level of information; authoritative yet digestible. You’ve really created something worthwhile and effective.” (Sophie, 2005)

“The course was really well organised and included excellent materials to take home and do more work on. It was run by the best facilitators...really helpful and supportive.” (Wendy Smith, 2005)