

10 Steps To Help Us from *Sound Health*

1. **Calm The Nervous System:** It's difficult to have clear and rational thought when the mind is racing with worry and anxiety, so the first step is to calm the nervous system. Make the conscious decision to set the worry aside for a few moments as you direct your focus towards the sensations in your body, and begin taking deep, long breaths. Take slow and deep breaths while counting slowly to three: 1... 2... 3... , then slowly let your breath out while counting 1... 2... 3...4...5 , and continue this calming practice for 5 to 10 minutes or until you can feel a degree of calm.
2. **Identify Exactly What Your Brain Is Trying To Protect You From:** It's common to not be entirely clear about what the brain is worrying about, but it's important to get as clear and specific as possible. Ask yourself these questions: What exactly am I afraid of happening? How would this harm me? How likely do I think this situation will occur? Between 1-100%? Would my 5 closest friends agree with the percentage I choose or would theirs be lower?
3. **Be Softer With Yourself:** Respect and love yourself for doing your best with your situation, and really forgive yourself for worrying. We all worry at times in our own ways. Relax. Begin using gentle ways to talk to yourself. Ask yourself, "If I knew the solution would appear with ease and grace, what would I do differently?" This question in itself relaxes the grip that worry has and allows it to fade away. As the mind begins to relax, it becomes easier to see new possibilities and solutions.
4. **Write Down What The Worst, Best, And Most Likely Outcomes Are:** Take away the need for the emotional system to worry by consciously considering the full range of possible outcomes. When we feel mentally prepared, our level of worry and anxiety naturally decreases. While the worst outcome written down might sound extreme, make sure to spend more time considering and writing down what the *most likely* outcome will be. The most likely outcome tends to be more realistic and less worrying than our feelings try to make them.
5. **Write Down What The Evidence Is For And Against Your Prediction:** Just the feeling of worry itself can cause the mind to think that something bad will happen, even if that is clearly not the case. Negative predictions are often based on limited or biased information, resulting when the mind's fight-or-flight response skips over needing all of the information before sending fear based signals to prevent possible danger (whether it's real or not). Writing down all evidence for and against the worry's prediction. Weigh all of the evidence together. After everything has been noted, consider again what percent chance you think the worrying event has of happening.
6. **Ask Yourself: Is Worrying Actually Helping You?** What are you hoping to get from worrying? How exactly will focusing on so many negative outcomes help you compared to focusing on the possible positive ones? We may think that worrying helps to prepare us, but isn't it possible to prepare for something without stressing ourselves out with worry in the meantime? Think back to all of the times you've worried in the past, and give some considerable thought to see if it has actually helped you or simply stressed you out in the past. It's important to recognize and deal with worry in healthy ways rather than ignoring it and continuing to feed it.
7. **Acknowledge That You Aren't 100% Certain Of The Actual Future:** Can your worries really predict the future? As much as worrying can try to spell danger or say that something terrible might happen, *it in fact does not know* the future. It is not accurate in saying that something bad will happen. It is simply trying to prevent the possibility of something unfavorable happening. Realizing this diffuses some of the strong fear-based feelings and beliefs that try to incorrectly convince the mind that danger is sure to happen. Most of our worries are simply that; just worries.
8. **How Have You Coped With Similar Situations In The Past?:** Worry comes when we think we can't solve a possible problem if it occurs. Yet when fact-checking our own mind and emotional responses, it's clear that we've solved and overcome countless challenges and obstacles in the past. Think back to times you've successfully dealt with and handled worrisome situations, and remember all of the times that you've been able to cope with and get through challenges in a healthy way.
9. **Consider How You Could Handle A Negative Outcome If It Did Occur:** If a relationship ends, would the world be over, or would you be able to cope, regain a healthy balance, and still enjoy your life? If your presentation doesn't go as well as planned, are you able to learn from it and practice techniques to do better next time? Humans are incredibly resilient, and chances are highly favorable that, with the right mindset, you can do a wonderful job at handling a negative outcome if it did occur. Remember your strengths and the ways you've coped in the past.
10. **What Advice Would You Give To A Friend?:** If a relationship ends, would the world be over, or would you be able to cope, regain a healthy balance, and still enjoy your life? If your presentation doesn't go as well as planned, are you able to learn from it and practice techniques to do better next time? Humans are incredibly resilient, and chances are highly favorable that, with the right mindset, you can do a wonderful job at handling a negative outcome if it did occur. Remember your strengths and the ways you've coped in the past.