



AnxietyLab.org

3-4-5 Program Course

Method #1

Put worry on a schedule

RULE #1 Put worry on a schedule

Designate a “worry schedule”. Pick a time during the day that is reserved for 'going over' your issues (worrying). Ideally you'll be doing journaling and affirmations, so that may be the time period used for your daily thoughts about your issue(s). The rule is that you do not spend the rest of the day 'going over' things, only during the time period you scheduled. This postponement will help break the habit and give you more of a sense of control over what you're doing.

Method 1: The Final Answer

There is a theory that suggests we simply stop thinking at the first anxious thought and go no further. That does not really work for most people. Nagging worries would be artificially suppressed and take up residence in the unconscious where they would continue to distract. A more effective method may be to formulate your “Final Answer” thought as a method to stop the worrying cycles. The Final Answer thought is one that you believe, it answers the worry in a way that lets you authentically put the thoughts aside. There can be more than one but they have to be based on reality. (That is one of the objectives of going through the 3-4-5 Program, to find your Final Answer thought that ends rumination and “wires it” into your

thinking habits.)

Example

The first anxious thought that appears is usually about something specific. In this example, the client of a lawyer has a complaint and threatens to sue. The lawyer may then start the worry cycle and go into an anxiety spiral during the months of preparation for a lawsuit. The lawyer could spend enormous amounts of time 'thinking it through' to get prepared and 'solve' the problem and eliminate the possibility of all the other bad things that would happen. Endless nights awake ruminating cause the lawyer's work performance to suffer adding to the stress. It also causes other health problems.

The first thought *"If I'm sued I'll lose everything"* has to be answered by a thought that is true enough and powerful enough to end the cycle. You have to believe it.

The lawyer realized that he has professional liability insurance. The lawyer can also do other things to protect his career and home. He has to find the final answer thought that can end the worry. What could that thought be? It depends on what the lawyer finds convincing and comforting. The lawyer's Final Answer thought became: *"I've never been sued before but if I am, insurance will cover me."* This was believable and effective enough *for him* to stop worrying because rationally he knew it was true.

How to get to *"I trust myself to handle it if it happens"*:

Using your prior life experience to answer these questions is very effective. Going through the journaling process is an opportunity to find real life evidence of things you have accomplished before. Everyone has solved a big problem at least once in their lives. Use your life history as your tool – when have you solved a problem before? Taking an inventory and being generous to yourself and giving yourself credit for difficult things you have already accomplished is a great exercise and can help you find specific evidence for trusting yourself.

The goal is to get to the point where a general thought like, *"I trust myself to handle it if it comes"* works for you. Any thought that helps you end the nagging worry and put it away is what you're looking for in your logging and affirmations.

Once you've thought about your life and found evidence of prior problem-solving or even just the ability to survive, you now have MATERIAL to use to craft your own Final Answer

thought. This is a tool you can use to end anxiety from now on.

But it still takes effort to make yourself stick to the rules. Once you have anxiety on the run, double down on your efforts and progress will accelerate.