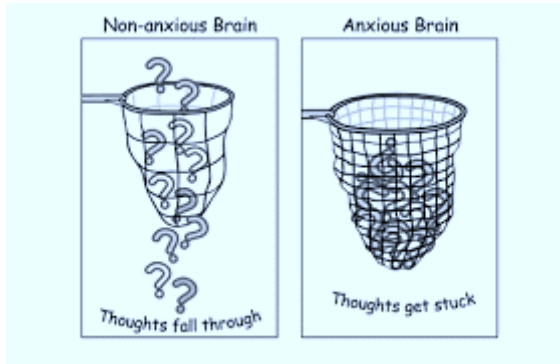


Finish the Sentence Tool for Healing the “What if” Worries



Sometimes worries may get stuck in your head. Stress can trigger this or it can be a learned habit— “*what if...*”
What if they don’t like me? → *What if I offend them or hurt feelings?* → *What if I made a mistake?* → *What if I never find anyone to love?* → *What if I can’t pay my bills?* → *Lose my job?* → *What if I get sick?* → *What if I die?*

Worries loop from one “*what-if*” scenario to another and back again. The worry-loops create obsessive hyper-focus on the worry—inability to concentrate on anything else, and even health problems such as insomnia, appetite problems, digestion and bowel problems, headaches, muscle tension and chronic pain. So what can you do to stop the worries? Stop the looping?

This “finish the sentence” tool helps you move through your worries by moving into the rational, more logical part of your mind. By inviting reason and problem-solving to “finish the sentence”, your brain moves from the fear response into the logic center of your brain. Your worries are transformed into wisdom. Are you ready to teach your brain how to finish the sentence?

1. **Start by acknowledging your worry. Write it out.**
2. **Keep finishing the sentences→and then what happens?** Continue thinking through the sequence of events until you reach a logical conclusion. Use the example below as a guide, then practice your own worries on the back of this page.

Example for “finish the sentence tool”

What am I am worried about? *I am worried that I will make a big mistake*
 ↓
 Then what would happen? *I will feel really, really, embarrassed*
 ↓
 Then what would happen? *People will know that I am stupid*
 ↓
 Then what would happen? *They won’t like me*
 ↓
 Then what would happen? *I won’t have any friends*
 ↓
 Then what would happen? *I would be all alone, lonely*
 ↓
 Then what would happen? *I would get depressed*
 ↓
 Then what would happen? *I would be miserable*
 ↓
 Then what would happen? *I survive and move on by figuring it out or asking for help!*
 When finishing sentences, your thought process will take one of several directions:

Negative events continue: → Lose job, car, home ...become homeless go to jail etc...
or
self-destruction takes over → gain weight, addiction, self-harm, hospitalized, death..etc

But... → **Eventually, the logic kicks in!**

Worry sees a problem; wisdom solves a problem.

Eventually you notice your unrealistic exaggerations. As you think through your worry, you either discover a solution, embrace acceptance or notice your worry is not true. If your worry is true, you realize that options are available and problem-solving is possible. Eventually, finishing the sentence helps you challenge, problem-solve or accept your worries!

**You will know that you have reached a logical conclusion
when you have addressed your worry
with the same compassion and problem-solving ability
that you offer in your advice to friends.**

The logical conclusions to all worries include:

- humanize and normalize the worry—you are never the only person with this worry
- apply self-compassion to your worry with the same compassion you show a beloved
- accept the things that you have no control over. (Look up the “[Serenity Prayer](#)” if unfamiliar)
- problem-solve— use coping skills for anxiety and reframe worries into choices
- survive and move forward by aligning your thoughts, actions and values.

Now it is your turn to practice. Write out your worries then finish each sentence.

What is your troublesome worry? _____
 ↓
 Then what would happen? _____
 ↓
 Then what would happen? _____
 ↓
 Then what would happen? _____
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 Then what would happen? _____
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 Then what would happen? _____
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 Then what would happen? _____
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 Then what would happen? _____
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 Then what would happen? _____
 ↓
 Then what would happen? _____

Use more paper if needed. **Choose wisdom-focused thoughts over Worry-focused thoughts!**