Worry Postponement

Psychologists think that there are two types of worry:

1. **Real event worries** are about actual problems affecting you right now and which you can act on now.
   "My toddler is reaching for something dangerous", "I need to call my friend or she will think I have forgotten her birthday"
   "I can't find my keys", "I can't afford to pay this electricity bill", "My boyfriend isn't speaking to me".
2. **Hypothetical worries** are about things that do not currently exist, but which *might* happen in the future.
   "What if my husband crashes the car when he drives to his parents?", "Maybe this worrying is making me crazy"
   "I couldn't stand if it my son liked playing dangerous sports when he's older".

People who are bothered by worry often experience it as *uncontrollable,* time consuming, and believe that it is beneficial to engage in worry when it occurs. Experimenting with postponing your worries – deliberately setting aside some time in your day to do nothing but worry – is a helpful way of exploring your relationship with worry. Follow the steps below for *at least* one week.

Step 1: Preparation

Decide **when** your worry time will be, and for **how long** it will be for.

- 'Worry time' is time you set aside every day for the specific purpose of worrying.
- What time of day do you think you will be in the best frame of mind to attend to your worries?
- When are you unlikely to be disturbed?
- If you are unsure, 15 to 30 minutes every day at 7:00pm is often a good starting point.

Step 2: Worry postponement

During the day, decide whether worries that surface are real event worries you can act on now, or whether they are hypothetical worries that need to be postponed.

Is this a *real event worry* I can do something about right now?

Yes → **Take action now.**

No → **Postpone thinking about it until worry time.**

Redirect your attention to the present by becoming mindful of the present moment:

- use your senses (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste).
- try to focus your attention externally rather than internally.
- say to yourself "I'm not going to engage in this worry now, I will engage in this worry later".

Step 3: Worry time

Use your dedicated worry time for worrying. Consider writing down any of the hypothetical worries that you remember having had throughout the day. How concerning are they to you now? Are any of them the kinds of worries that can lead you to take practical actions?

- Try to use all of your allocated worry time, even if you do not feel that you have much to worry about, or even if worries do not seem as pressing at this time.
- Reflect upon your worries now – do they give you the same emotional 'kick' when you think about them now as they did when you first thought of them?
- Can any of your worries be converted into a practical problem to which you can look for a solution?

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