

Breaking the Worry Habit

✖ When I ask the people in any audience, “Do you worry?” the response is a nearly unanimous, “Yes!” Many admit to having a master’s degree in worry. They have perfected the art of worrying with a lifetime of practice. And in all the worry, nothing of real value is gained.

Worry will never change an outcome, solve a problem or invite a miracle. Creativity will. Persistence will. Action will. Prayer will. But worry cannot. In fact, worry will keep you from doing all the things that will make a difference.

We have received such good counsel concerning worry: “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” (Matt. 6:27, NIV). The King James Version translates the verse: “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”

What we focus on we feed, and what we feed grows. When we feed our problems with worry, they become like giants, and in comparison we feel small and vulnerable.

Author-speaker Brian Tracy writes that worry is actually goal setting in reverse. In *The Psychology of Achievement*, he warns, “We are traveling in the direction of our most dominant thought.”

Tracy’s theory resonated with me, especially after I had the opportunity to test its validity in a physical way.

I took up inline skating—in spite of a lifelong personal

fear of falling. My son, Tabor, who was in fifth grade at the time, was a natural at it. He took off like a bullet down the parkway near our home, but I hobbled onto it gingerly, terrified of going too fast and wiping out.

Within 15 minutes the ambulance arrived. In the emergency room, I complained to Tabor. "You put them [the inline skates] on for the first time and have a wonderful ride. I put them on and 9-1-1 is on the line."

His answer was profound. "All I was thinking about was going faster, and all you were thinking about was falling down. I guess we both ended up where we thought we would be."

We are headed for what we are thinking about. That's why we get what we are afraid of and not what we want.

Time and again I find that worry and fear cannot live in the same space with hope and action. One will always drive out the other. When you stand on faith and take positive action, you evict worry and fear. When you allow fear and worry to move in, hope and action are driven away.

The first step in breaking the worry habit is to become more aware of when you are worrying and what you are worrying about.

Catch yourself in the act of doing it! Don't allow worry or fear to play in some corner of your mind, just beyond your reach. Pull

it out
and into the light where you can squarely face it.

I encourage you to make a worry list. Go ahead; indulge yourself! Take a moment now to write down every single worry that is causing you emotional distress, anxiety or fear.

When you have completed your list, cross off anything you cannot personally control or influence. (You may find your list is considerably shorter—or gone.)

This is an important revelation. It means you are giving a lot of your mental, physical and emotional energy to things you cannot affect.

And when you are worrying about what you *can't* impact, you aren't focusing on what you *can*. You are giving your strength away! You are draining your battery.

The moment we focus on the action we *can* take, the decision we *can* make, what we *can* do, a critical shift occurs. We move from a state of *worry* into a state of *action*. And action, you will find, is a marvelous cure for worry.

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