

Lighten Up!

Question: I have suffered with anxiety for much of my life. I have been prescribed many medications, and I've become addicted to some of them. Is there any hope that I'll ever be able to control my anxiety?

G.P., Bethesda, Maryland

Answer: Anxiety is so common that it is often referred to as the "common cold of mental illness." The true key to overcoming anxiousness, and the worrying that spawns it, is to learn to meditate on the Word of God instead of worrisome thoughts. Doing so enables you to cast down imaginations that promote anxiety and are contrary to the Word of God.

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4, NKJV).

Worry is the opposite of faith. Without faith it is impossible for us to please God (see Heb. 11:6). So it is important not only to your mental health but also to your spiritual health that you subdue anxious thoughts. It's like changing the channel of your mind from The Worry Channel to The Faith Channel!

Pastor and author Rick Warren writes in his best-selling book *The Purpose-Driven Life*: "When you think about a problem over and over ... that is called worry. Whereas meditating on God's word is simply thinking about the answer over and over."

I'm sure you've seen a bumper sticker or a plaque that read "Let Go, Let God" or "One Day at a Time." Maybe you've seen

“The Serenity Prayer,” a portion of which reads: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.”

These message-statements are meaningful to millions of people and popular with those who suffer from anxiety, depression and various addictions. Why? Because when put into practice, they work! They inspire people to “mindfulness,” which is an important technique for overcoming anxiety. Mindfulness involves letting go of any thought that is unrelated to the present moment.

It is exemplified in people we know who seem to live “in the moment”—those whose credo is always: “Enjoy life. Live each day as if it were your last.” We might laugh at the free spirit they exude, but secretly we long to share in their freedom from worry and fear.

I recommend that you learn to focus your attention on the present, which includes the people and the scenery around you. Refuse to fret about the future or worry about the past. When an anxious or worrisome thought pops into your head, refocus your mind. For more information, refer to my new book, *Stress Less* (Siloam).

I also recommend that you practice the following steps to help you regain your peace of mind.

Cultivate a thankful heart. Voicing gratitude and praise to God is also a great way to practice mindfulness. “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5:18). Of course, this will take a

little practice, but don't despair. It eventually will become a habit leading to peace just as, for many, worrying has become a habit leading to anxiety.

Eliminate "What if?" thinking. Ultimately, asking yourself "What if?" isn't a healthy mental exercise. Most of us tend to carry this kind of thinking too far. In the end, we imagine the worst-case scenario and have fueled worry and added only anxiety to our thought life.

Thinking about it will only drive you to distraction. Focus instead on what you can do in the present moment to benefit yourself and those around you.

Pray and let go of your worries. First Peter 5:7 tells us to cast all our cares (or worries) on Jesus. We are also told in Philippians 4:6 to be anxious for nothing. Practice meditating on these passages of God's Word.

Other Bible passages that I recommend for your meditation are Psalms 23, 91; Ephesians 6; and 1 Corinthians 13. Allow the Word of God to help you slam the door on worry and feed your faith. As Psalm 118:24 says, "This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

Those are words to think about—and live by.

Donald Colbert, M.D., is a family physician and nutrition expert. His many books, including his newest, *Stress Less*, are available from Siloam at [or at](#) . If you have a question for Dr. Colbert, write him at Doctor's Orders, 600 Rinehart Road, Lake Mary, FL 32746.