

# ARE YOU WORRIED? ANXIOUS? IS THAT A PROBLEM?

*Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow; it only saps today of its strength.*

A J Cronin

Daily we are reminded change is inevitable. Stress and change are intertwined, and we must run just to keep pace. Yet we would love to shout, *ENOUGH WITH CHANGE!*

In order to cope with change we develop routines that allow us to work within particular structures and provide a sense of stability and security. These normal routines give a sense of purpose, direction, and opportunities for fulfillment and achievement.

Many external factors (eg life transitions and relationship or job loss) disrupt our normal routines. As a result, we experience heightened emotions including frustration, anger, anxiety, and at times, depression. While these are normal daily emotions, sometimes they linger and become habitual.



Our normal routine being disrupted, we may experience a pervasive and persistent sense of distress, trouble sleeping, and an inability to relax and concentrate. Focus for more than a few minutes at a time without becoming worried, anxious, and fearful becomes difficult. Being told not to be worried, anxious, or fearful is like being told not to sniffle when we have a bad cold.

When worried or anxious, we interpret external events and situations in a negative, catastrophic manner. Partly this is due to our nature but frequently we are fearful of abandoning our particular comfort zone and tackling new demands with the implications they raise for us. Martin Seligman, a psychologist renowned for his work on anxiety and depression, has written-

*Anxiety is your mental tongue. Its default mode is to search for what may be about to go wrong. It continually, and without your conscious consent, scans your life - yes, even when you are asleep, in dreams and nightmares. It reviews your work, your love, your play - until it finds an imperfection. When it finds one, it worries it. It tries to pull it out from its hiding place, where it is wedged inconspicuously under some rock. It will not let go.*

The positive side of anxiety and worry is that they normally propel us into some form of action. For example, fear of failure or embarrassment can motivate us to spend extra time in preparation and planning. They can drive us to search for alternatives and to mentally rehearse various optional courses of action.

The trick is to know when to listen to our emotions and their messages and when to take appropriate steps to relieve the free-floating and persistent distress that impacts our health and well-being.

## Suggestions to Handle Distress Resulting from Change

Ask yourself the following questions-

**Are my thoughts and emotions irrational?**

**Are they out of proportion to the reality of the situation that I am facing?**

**Are they unproductive or counter-productive?**

**Are they restraining or paralyzing me from taking action or problem-solving?**

**Are they dominating my thinking?**

**Are they so severe and intense that they are interfering with my daily activities and routine?**

If you have answered **YES** to **ANY** of these questions-

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- **Stop listening to your emotions and begin to alleviate your anxiety.**

Only worry if you are worrying towards a solution. If you catch yourself worrying and it is not towards a solution, say to yourself **Stop** or **Who needs this**. Then focus on the qualities that you have that will help you reach a solution.

- **Change the way you perceive or think about your situation.**

Distinguish between the factors that are within your control versus those that are not. Focus your thinking and your attention only on those factors that are within your control.

- **Engage in distractions and relaxation techniques.**

- **Become more action oriented.**

- **Talk to a trusted friend or family member about your thoughts and emotions and what you can do to change them. Listen to their counsel.**

If you have answered **YES** to **SEVERAL OR MOST** of these questions-

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- Talk with your family doctor.
- Reframe your thinking about the situation. Act as your own defense lawyer as opposed to the lawyer for the prosecution.
- Set some realistic goals and take action.
- Plan how you would handle the same situation, should it occur again. Focus on the strengths you have that will help you do this.
- Participate in relaxing activities.

**Following these suggestions will relieve the distressful thoughts and emotions resulting from change.**

**Most of us require some support to successfully implement an action plan.  
For help contact Brown Crawshaw, your Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP) Provider.**

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**YOUR LOGO HERE**

**For confidential assistance  
Brown Crawshaw 1.800.668.2055  
www.browncrawshaw.com**