

Living in an Uncertain World

Watch the news these days and you'll most likely hear about nations at war, a natural disaster, a grim jobs report or crime in your neighborhood. In our connected world, 24/7 access to information can expose us to an ongoing stream of bad news.

And so, we worry.

We worry that we'll lose our job and not be able to find another one. Or that our kids may not be safe at school. Or that sinking stock prices will wipe out our retirement. In an unpredictable world, we never quite know what to expect.

Worry can trigger all kinds of health issues. We may toss and turn at night, or grind our teeth in our sleep. We may start smoking again to "take the edge off" or lose our cool easily.

In an unpredictable world, how can we learn to ease our worries and live with more confidence? Consider these tips:

- **Most importantly, know what's in your control.** The next time you start to worry, ask yourself if you are worrying about something you can control. If yes, take action, and if no, let the worry go. For example, if you're worried about your nest egg, consider talking to a financial planner, taking a personal finance course, paying down debt and starting a side business. Taking action will make you feel more in control and ease your worry.
- **Filter the news.** You may want to stay up to date on the news, but knowing every last detail about a traumatic event halfway across the world may not be helpful to you. Instead, identify what might actually affect you and then take action to address what you can. Again, let go of what you have no control over. For instance, if there is a robbery in your neighborhood, ask your police department if they can do a home security assessment.
- **Connect face-to-face.** Spend time in person with family and friends. When talking through your worries, identify what is in your control and then brainstorm ways to address those worries. Sure, technology makes it easier to connect, but when you're worried, talking in person can be more comforting.
- **Get grounded.** Watch the sunset or sunrise. Listen to the ocean waves. Snuggle with your pet or loved ones. Savor a cup of tea. These little moments of stability during your day can ground you.
- **Keep healthy habits.** Exercise is a great way to boost your mood and soothe anxiety. Reduce the caffeine and sugar in your diet. Make sure you drink plenty of water and get plenty of sleep. Explore yoga or meditation to calm your mind.

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- **Avoid self-medication.** Alcohol and other substances may make you feel less anxious in the moment, but the longer-term consequences are serious. If you become addicted, your health, relationships, career and finances could suffer. And self-medicating doesn't solve problems; when the effects wear off, you may still be left with an uncomfortable emotion that can actually feel worse from the wearing-off effect.

When to seek professional help

Chronic worry can take a toll. If your worry is chronic, call your EAP for evaluation and a possible referral.

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