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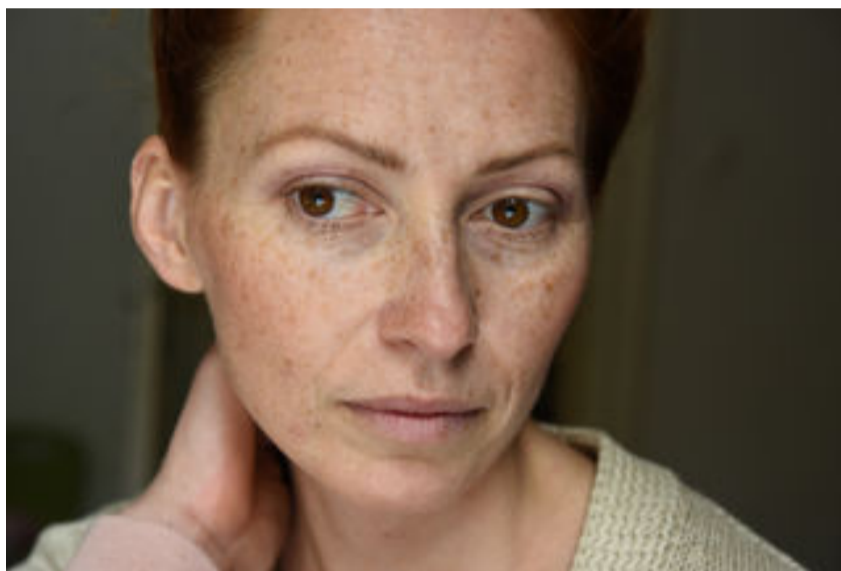Find a Therapist (City or Zip)   ✓ Verified by **Psychology Today**

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What Mentally Strong People Don't Do

How to Stop Worrying About Things You Can't Change

Stop wasting time worrying and become more effective and more productive.

Posted May 09, 2017

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There's a brutal truth in life that some people refuse to accept: You have no control over many of the things that happen in your life.

Some people who resist this truth become control freaks. They micromanage, refuse to delegate tasks, and try to force other people to change. They think if they can gain enough control over other people and the situations they find themselves in, they can prevent bad things from happening.

Others know they can't prevent bad things from happening, but they worry about them anyway. They fret about everything from natural disasters to deadly diseases. Their worries keep them occupied, but ultimately they waste their time and energy, because worrying doesn't do any good.

If you find yourself wasting time worrying about things you can't control, here are six things that can help:

1. Determine what you can control.

When you find yourself worrying, take a minute to examine the things you have control over. You can't prevent a storm from coming, but you can prepare for it. You can't control how someone else behaves, but you can control how you react.

Recognize that, sometimes, all you can control is your effort and your attitude. When you put your energy into the things you can control, you'll be much more effective.

2. Focus on your influence.

You can influence people and circumstances, but you can't force things to go your way. So while you can give your child the tools he needs to get good grades, for example, you can't make him get a 4.0 GPA. And while you can plan a good party, you can't make people have fun.

To have the most influence, focus on changing *your* behavior. Be a good role model and set healthy boundaries for yourself. When you have concerns about someone else's choices, share your opinion, but only share it once. Don't try to fix people who don't want to be fixed.

3. Identify your fears.

But sometimes people are so busy thinking things like, "I can't allow my business to fail," that they don't take the time to ask themselves, "What would I do if my business failed?" Acknowledging that you can handle the worst-case scenario can help you put your energy into more productive exercises.

4. Differentiate between ruminating and problem-solving.

Replaying conversations in your head or imagining catastrophic outcomes over and over again isn't helpful. But solving a problem is.

Ask yourself whether your thinking is productive. If you are actively solving a problem, such as trying to find ways to increase your chances of success, keep working on solutions.

If, however, you're wasting your time ruminating, change the channel in your brain. Acknowledge that your thoughts aren't helpful, and get up and go do something else for a few minutes to get your brain focused on something more productive.

5. Create a plan to manage your stress.

Exercising, eating healthy, and getting plenty of sleep are just a few key things you need to do to take care of yourself. You also have to make time to manage your stress so you can operate more efficiently.

Find healthy stress relievers, like meditation, an engaging hobby, or time with friends. Pay attention to your stress level, and notice how you cope with distress. Eliminate unhealthy coping skills, like complaining to others, or drinking too much.

6. Develop healthy affirmations.

I have two phrases I use to remind myself to either take action or calm down. The first is, *Make it happen*. Whenever I catch myself saying something like, "I hope I do OK today," I remind myself, "Make it happen." It reminds me that I'm in control of my actions.