



How to Stop Worrying and Start Living

Time-Tested Methods for Conquering Worry
by Dale Carnegie
Originally published 1944
Pocket Books, 1985
358 pages

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Take-Aways

- Today is your most precious possession.
- Learn to accept and cooperate with the inevitable.
- Avoid worrying about either the past or the future. “Live in daylight compartments,” in which you focus on the present and what you can do today.
- Put past mistakes behind you and move on.
- When you worry, you become tense and nervous. This affects your bodily chemistry and it is dangerous for your health.
- You will worry less if you analyze the problem so you can do something about it.
- Get busy with something else; preferably something constructive. This technique works well, because the human mind cannot think of more than one thing at a time.
- Don’t concern yourself with minor things.
- Change your mental attitude and stay positive.

Rating (10 is best)

Overall	Applicability	Innovation	Style
7	7	6	8

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Review

How to Stop Worrying and Start Living

Dale Carnegie compiles time tested wisdom in this book of principles on how to avoid worrying about problems you can't affect. Carnegie outlines some basic principles to help you stop worrying. He draws from common sense, from people who have achieved peace and happiness, and from the sayings of philosophers, business leaders and others. Although Carnegie wrote his book in the 1940's and some of his examples may seem dated, his basic principles are timeless – in fact, ahead of his time. He presents them in an easy-to-read, personal way. He draws on his own and other people's experiences to show a number of techniques for letting go of worries and becoming more productive. *getAbstract.com* recommends this self-development classic to everyone.

Abstract

Stop Worrying About the Past or the Future

To get the most out of this book, review the basic principles and think about how you can apply them. Then, use them whenever you have an opportunity. Keep a diary showing how and when you used them, and review your progress periodically. Consider how to improve the way you employ these principles, so that you will worry less and less. Some basic principles that will help you reduce worrying and live more effectively include:

Put the past in the past and focus on the present: Many times, when you worry you are thinking about the past and blaming yourself for what you have done wrong. However, if you can follow this principle, you can eliminate many worries. As the writer Thomas Carlyle said, "Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand."

Do not become anxious about the future: Thinking about the future can be another source of worry. While it's important to carefully think about and plan for future developments, don't become anxious about it. Realize that good thinking concerns itself, "with causes and effects and leads to logical, constructive planning."

Focus on the present and what you can do today: To avoid worrying about either the past or the future, "live in daytight compartments," in the here and now. You should, "shut the iron doors on the past and future." Recognize that, "today is our most precious possession. It is our only sure possession."

Consider the worst thing that could happen, and prepare for it: Another way to avoid worrying is to analyze your situation and determine what is the worst that could possibly happen. Then, reconcile yourself to accepting it, if necessary. At the same time, focus your time and energy on trying to "improve upon the worst," which you have already accepted mentally. This approach works well because it provides a psychological release of energy. When you accept the worst, you have nothing more to lose. That means, in turn, that you have everything to gain. This realization will help you relax, do what you can to improve upon the situation, and move on.

"Shut off the past!
Let the dead past
bury its dead.
Shut out the
yesterdays which
have lighted fools
the way to dusty
death."

"Every day is a
new life to a wise
man."

“One of the most tragic things I know about human nature is that all of us tend to put off living. We are all dreaming of some magical rose garden over the horizon – instead of enjoying the roses that are blooming outside our windows today.”

“True peace of mind comes from accepting the worst. Psychologically, it means a release of energy.”

“Remind yourself of the exorbitant price you can pay for worry in terms of your health. Those who do not know how to fight worry die young.”

What Worry Can Do To You

You can also reduce worrying by realizing the dangers of worry itself. An underlying reason for worry is fear. When you worry, you become tense and nervous, and so worry actually affects your bodily chemistry. It can produce illness and ulcers. One Mayo Clinic study showed that about a third of the business executives studied, who had an average age of 44, suffered from three ailments associated with high-tension – heart disease, ulcers and high blood pressure. So worrying is truly dangerous for your health. Remind yourself of how costly worry can be. You’ll live longer if you worry less.

Get the Facts and Decide What to Do

You also will worry less if you analyze a problem so you can do something about it. The first step is to get the facts. Next, analyze the facts. Finally, come to a decision and act on it. When you have the facts, you are able to do something about the problem intelligently. Without the facts, you will “stew around in confusion.” By contrast, if you obtain the facts in “an impartial, objective way,” your worries usually “evaporate in the light of knowledge.”

One way to get the facts impartially is to imagine you are collecting the information for someone else. Then, you can be less emotional about the task. Try to collect facts on both sides of a problem, much as a lawyer might gather facts to assess a case’s strengths and weaknesses. It also helps to write down exactly what you are worrying about and what you know you already can do about it. Then, decide what to do and begin.

Having your employees use this technique will also help to reduce the problems they bring to you. For example, before you hold a problem-solving meeting, ask your employees to make their own analysis of what the problem is and what to do about it. They should ask themselves: 1) What is the problem? 2) What causes it? 3) What are all the possible solutions? 4) What solution do I suggest? Often, after employees do this, they will discover the solution and take action themselves, and will not need to come to you for guidance.

Techniques to Break the Worry Habit

Delete worries out of your mind by getting busy with something else. The human mind cannot think of more than one thing at a time. Thus, you cannot be enthusiastic about doing something you like and “dragged down by worry” at the same time. Thinking about what you enjoy doing will crowd out your worries. This principle is why occupational therapy works well with people who are anxious. It takes their minds off their worries. So lose yourself in action and stay busy to help you stop worrying.

Don’t concern yourself with minor things. You can end up worrying needlessly about small matters. These “small blows” to your self-esteem and “little jolts” to your vanity are unimportant. If you want peace of mind, don’t concern yourself with trifles. Ignore them as the law does, as expressed in the well-known legal maxim: “De minimis non curat lex” (The law does not concern itself with trifles). Change your focus so you are concerned with more important matters. Don’t allow yourself to be upset by the small things you should “despise and forget.” Remember: “Life is too short to be little.”

Recognize that, based on the law of averages, your worries have little justification. Considering the law of averages will help you stop worrying, because you will recognize that the vast majority of the things you worry about never happen. “Nearly all of our worries

“If a man will devote his time to securing facts in an impartial, objective way, his worries will usually evaporate in the light of knowledge.”

“It is the failure to arrive at a fixed purpose, the inability to stop going round and round in maddening circles, that drives men to nervous break downs and living hells.”

“Worry is most apt to ride you ragged not when you are in action, but when the day’s work is done. Your imagination can run riot then and bring up all sorts of ridiculous possibilities and magnify each little blunder.”

and unhappiness come from our imagination and not from reality.” Be more realistic about the subject of your concerns. Ask yourself what are the real chances, according to the law of averages, that this concern will really happen? If it is unlikely to happen, you don’t have to worry about it.

Cooperate with the Inevitable. It doesn’t make sense to fight against something that is certain to occur. Instead, learn to accept what is inevitably going to happen and act to make the best of it. If you fight it, you will be upset and angry for no purpose. Certainly, fight hard if you can change the situation. But if you can’t, forget it; put it in the past and move on.

Put a stop-loss order on your worries. You can apply this stock market principle to reducing your worries. For example, if you are planning to meet someone and that person is late, don’t wait and worry. Rather, tell that person in advance that you plan to wait a certain length of time and leave; then do so. By placing a stop-loss order, you determine in advance how much time or energy you will commit to something. After that point, don’t spend any more time or energy.

Don’t try to saw sawdust. This is the principle of putting past mistakes behind you and moving on. Calmly analyze your past mistakes, so you can learn from them. But then don’t dwell on them or regret what cannot be. This is the same principle as, “Don’t cry over spilt milk.” If you worry about things that are over and done with, you are “trying to saw sawdust,” and that’s a waste of time.

Ways to Change Your Attitude

Besides taking specific steps to stop worrying, it’s also critical to change your mental attitude, because, “Our thoughts make us what we are.” Thus, to shape who you want to be and to worry less, you need to choose the right thoughts. This means having a positive attitude rather than a negative one. Be concerned about your problems, but not worried about them. Let your positive attitude guide you into taking productive, useful actions to resolve these problems.

Staying positive can have dramatic effects. If you can change your thoughts, you can “banish worry, fear and various kinds of illnesses.” The importance of having a positive attitude is even expressed in the Bible. Remember the phrase: “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

It may be difficult to change your feelings and emotions by just making up your mind that you want to do it. However, you can do it by changing your actions. Those actions will affect how you feel. For example, if you act out the “symptoms of being radiantly happy,” you will become happy. It is physically impossible to remain unhappy and depressed while you are acting in a contrary happy way. In other words, “think and act cheerfully, and you will feel cheerful.”

Other Keys to Gaining Peace and Happiness

Some other methods of gaining a more positive attitude include the following:

1. Don’t try to get even or get revenge if you feel someone has wronged you. If you hate your enemies, you are giving them power. Instead, cross them off your list or ignore them. As General Eisenhower once said: “Let’s never waste a minute thinking about people we don’t like.”

“The remedy for worry is to get completely occupied doing something constructive.”

“We must accept and cooperate with the inevitable.”

2. Don't expect people to be grateful because people often forget to show gratitude. It is better to be surprised when people are grateful than to expect it. Instead, just give for the joy of giving.
3. “Count your blessings - not your troubles,” means focusing on what is good and right about your life, rather than the things that are wrong. You will find that about ninety percent of your life is working well, so focus on that ninety percent and ignore the ten percent that is having problems.
4. Concentrate on being who you are rather than trying to be like someone else. Everyone is unique, so “no matter what happens, always be yourself.” Don't try to imitate others. Find and be yourself.
5. Use prayer, regardless of your religious background, to help inspire you. Prayer will help you put in words exactly what is bothering you and will give you a sense of sharing your burdens and not being alone. It will also help to energize you into taking action to resolve your problem.
6. If you have a lemon, make lemonade, in other words, ponder the lessons you can learn from misfortune. For example, a farmer's land was infested with rattlesnakes. He found that by canning rattlesnake meat, he could sell a unique product. He made a fortune from his rattlesnakes. Think about how you can turn problems into opportunities. How can you profit from your losses? Many individuals who started life with great handicaps were spurred on to great achievements as they overcame their handicaps.

About The Author

Dale Carnegie was a well-known inspirational teacher and writer. His books sold in the millions of copies in the 1940's. They became the basis for a series of seminars and training programs for people in business, especially in sales. His books include *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, *How to Develop Self-Confidence and Influence People by Public Speaking*, *How to Enjoy Your Life and Your Job* and *The Quick and Easy Way to Effective Speaking*.

Buzz-Words

Daytight compartments / Positive mental attitude