

WORRYING

Having worried thoughts is a common response to stressful situations. In order to regulate our worried thoughts, it is helpful to learn how to access our relaxation system through FLARE skills.

The FLARE Model

(Khazan, 2019)

Feel

Give yourself permission to lean in and become aware of any difficult emotions such as worry. These may be expressed as faster breathing or worried thoughts.

Label

Next, label the emotion in a non-judgmental way (“I’m noticing anxiety”). This helps to decrease the intensity of the emotion.

Allow

Instead of trying to force the emotion away, learn to make space and allow the emotion to be part of the experience. For example, breathe into the emotion and say “It’s okay to feel [this emotion]”.

Respond

Identify different options that you could choose to respond to the emotion. Choose the most helpful response based on self-compassion and other values.

Expand

Finally, expand awareness of the situation. See the emotion as a part of the overall experience, rather than as the entire experience.

While worrying is completely normal, if you’re experiencing excessive amounts of worry, talk to a qualified mental health professional.

Results of using FLARE

Practicing FLARE skills allows you to notice and make space for the worry without getting carried away by it. At the same time, these skills help you to respond to difficult emotions in a helpful way.

The FLARE model is most effective when it is combined with mindfulness. Mindfulness is the act of observing the present moment (e.g. thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and experiences) without getting tangled up in it.

Other Tips to Break the Worry Habit

- Consistent practice of mindfulness skills helps to enhance the effectiveness of FLARE.
- Get sufficient sleep. We are more likely to worry when we are tired.
- Schedule a “worry appointment” for 30 minutes a day, and worry only during that time.
- Honestly analyze the worrying situation. Learn what’s in your control and what is not. Allow yourself to calmly devote your energy to other things that are within your control.

