

## Reduce Stress with 'Scheduled Worry Time



Worry has many faces and it is common for each of us to experience it differently. The common trait of all worry is the “what-if” concern about the future, the churning over of unhelpful thoughts that produce no solutions. Whether your worry is something you have always had with you or a more recent addition to your life due to the coronavirus, there are several research-based tools you can use to get some relief. One of the tools is called Worry Time. It may sound strange, but it is surprisingly effective. Here are the basics:

**1. Worry serves a function**

It might feel like worry just happens, but research has shown that we often worry for a reason. Maybe we hope to find a solution to our problem, or we might feel like we are doing the responsible thing by worrying, or maybe we are trying to keep our mind off a more troubling concern. If we can find a reason to worry, maybe we can find a reason to *not* worry.

**2. Put worry on a schedule**

One way to worry less is to schedule 15-30 minutes of Worry Time each day during which you will focus only on your worries. If a worry shows up outside of your Worry Time, you simply make a note of it and get back to your life, reassured that you will get to the worry at the scheduled time. Then when the clock strikes Worry Time, you take out your list and focus on worrying.

**3. It is okay to use a Worries List**

Jotting down each worry on a list is a helpful exercise. The act of putting a concern on a list reassures your mind that it is not being neglected, that it **WILL** be taken care of during Worry Time. You will not forget it since it's on the list. It takes the urgency out of worrying once you have reassured yourself that you can deal with it later.

**4. It can serve as Solutions Time**

Sometimes it is hard to tell the difference between trivial worries and worries that really require our attention. Worry Time allows us to evaluate our concerns, to get a sense of whether a worry



is important or not. For worries that would benefit from our immediate attention, worry time can become Solutions Time. The feeling of accomplishment at having resolved a worry serves as a kind of reward, one that makes us more likely to commit to the next Worry Time.

**5. The feelings might not show up**

You might find that Worry Time comes but your worries do not. It is ok if you are no longer troubled by the things that seemed so concerning earlier in the day. That is quite common. If this happens to you, just smile, and move on. Worry often works that way.

Want to learn more? See our presentation on how to **Reduce Stress with 'Scheduled Worry Time'** in our *COVID-19 resource center* by visiting [learntolive.com/partners](https://learntolive.com/partners) and use the code **INTACT1**. If you are already a Learn to Live member, simply sign in with your username and password.