

Embracing Your Worries with Humor

Therapists tell us that when you have recurring and unwanted thoughts or worries, don't try and fight them, but rather embrace them. It may sound strange, but new research suggests that the more you try and stop thinking about something, the more you *will* think about it.

Take a moment and give it a try. Close your eyes and visualize an alligator lying on your bed. Think about this image for a minute. Now try *not* to think about an alligator on your bed. For most of us, this is very difficult and the image we are trying not to think about keeps popping into our mind.

Does This Sound Like You?

Hugh had just set off for the airport when he started thinking that he forgot to check if all of the windows were locked in his home. He was going to be out of town for a week and he knew he would worry about this all week long. He thought about turning back and checking the windows, but then he would miss his plane. He thought and thought as he drove, and although he was 99% sure that he had checked all the windows a few days ago, it was the 1% that was driving him crazy. He tried to drive the thought out of his mind and concentrate on his trip, but he found himself starting to get anxious about getting to the airport on time, getting through security, who he would sit next to on the plane, and what the weather would be like when he got to his destination. Hugh worried so much that he started to feel sick to his stomach.

Now let's suppose for a minute that Hugh didn't try and fight his worries about not locking his window and instead he *tried to think about what would happen if the windows were unlocked and also think about the worst thing that could happen*. Let's try this yourself so you can see what this experience is like.

Try It

Write down something you worry about in one sentence.

Now take a look at the following humorous ways to deal with unpleasant thoughts and put a check mark by ways that you think you would try.

_____ Sing a song about your worry to the tune of Happy Birthday over and over again for five minutes.

_____ Draw a funny picture of the worst thing that could happen if what you worry about came true.

_____ Make up a story about something you worry about all of the time and add a terrible ending.

_____ Write down the thought you worry about twenty times. Now write it two more times with your non-dominant hand.

_____ Translate your worry into another language. Now read the translation aloud five times (you can use www.translate.google). Now do it again in two more languages.

_____ Write the thing you worry most about reversing the letters of each word.

_____ Get a plain T-Shirt and write or draw your worry on the shirt with indelible marker. Make it as colorful as you can and wear it around the house for a few hours. Don't forget to take a look at yourself in the mirror!

_____ Fill your mouth with food (try some dry crackers if you have them) and say the thought that worries you most five times.

_____ Imagine yourself worrying as if you were in a movie—a horror movie. Visualize yourself in the place where you are most likely to worry, except that Freddy Kruger (or a similar scary villain) is playing you.

_____ Draw a comic strip about your worry or use a website like www.ToonDraw.com to make one up.

_____ Create a rap song about your worries with a program like Smule Auto Rap (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/autorap-by-smule/id524299475?mt=8>) Just speak your worries into your smartphone and the app will turn it into a rap song. Play the song at least five times and share it with others.

Other ideas to help you embrace your worries with a humorous twist.

Now for one week, try at least one humorous activity every day involving your most significant worry. Rate how you feel before and after each activity, with 1=little or no anxiety and 10=extreme anxiety.

Activity	Date/Time	Rate Your Anxiety Before the Activity	Rate Your Anxiety After the Activity

More to Think About

As you practiced different activities did you notice any new thoughts? What were they?

These activities were meant to be humorous. Were they? Did you smile? Laugh out loud?

Did you find that your anxiety around these worries diminished over the week?

Did you share what you were doing with anyone else? What was their reaction?

*This comic strip was made with ToonDoo (www.ToonDoo.com) a free online cartoon creator.

