

Dealing with Worry

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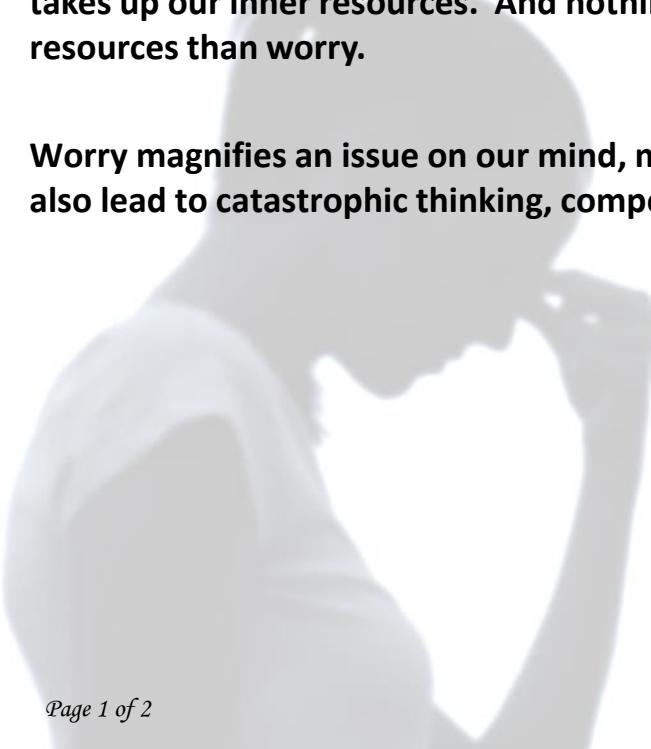
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A study by the US-based National Science Foundation suggests that a person thinks 12,000 to 60,000 thoughts on the average. Whether a fact or myth, that is a lot of thoughts going through one's head, considering the amount of waking moments each of us typically has in a given day.

A matter of greater significance is how much of our thoughts are really productive and beneficial, and how much is 'mental noise'.

Dr Caroline Leaf, a cognitive neuroscientist, likened human thoughts to "mental real estate", meaning they occupy precious space in the realm of our thought. Furthermore, whatever thought we choose to entertain, whether good or bad, it takes up our inner resources. And nothing could drain or deplete our mental resources than worry.

Worry magnifies an issue on our mind, making it bigger than it really is. It can also lead to catastrophic thinking, compounding the issue many times over.



Some of us perceive that we are being wise when we think of 'worst-case scenario'. But it is one thing to prepare oneself for a possible adverse outcome, and quite another to catastrophize an issue to a point that it causes sleepless nights and still nowhere close to solving the problem.

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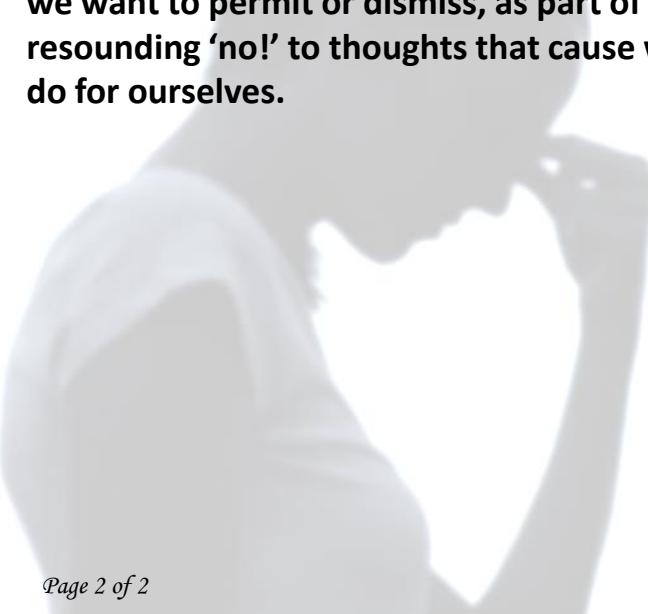
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Most of us could attest to the fact that worrying can be an exhausting affair, and it adds nothing or no good thing to the quality of life. The awful thing is that like most destructive habits, having the traits of a worry wart can have rippling effect on our social circles, be it at home, at work or in the community.

Just like being cool and stable can have calming effect on others during difficult times, being worrisome can also rub on others, albeit the wrong way, as it creates tension and anxiety. We would be indeed better off if we ask ourselves how we want to better use our energy.

It is said that we actually spend more time talking to ourselves more than we do to others. Since this is the case, we could learn to make our private, internal dialogue into a constructive self-discussion on what kind of thoughts are currently racing through our mind, and more importantly, what kind of thoughts we want to permit or dismiss, as part of our ‘mental hygiene’. Giving a resounding ‘no!’ to thoughts that cause worry is one of the best favors we could do for ourselves.



Like any other form of exercise, making ‘mental hygiene’ a way of life requires ongoing and determined practice. But it is well worth the endeavor as it reaps great dividends when we eventually find managing troubled thoughts less of a struggle.