

# Stress Bytes Newsletter

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**“WHEN STRESS BITES, BITE BACK!”**

THE NEWSLETTER OF ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.  
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## I'm a Recovering....Worrier!

### Needless Worry

Hello, my name is Annette and I'm a recovering worrier. What is worry? Worry is just mental rehearsal for things to go badly. It is a sign of anxiety and not feeling sure about a future event or situation. It is only one of many perspectives to take about the future.

When we worry, we repeat our fears and worse case scenarios over and over in our minds, as if worrying could keep something bad from happening. Worry seems automatic – like it's out of our control, but it's not. It's just a bad habit, most likely a learned habit, of letting your mind run in a negative direction and not making a conscious decision to refocus your thinking, plan for how you'd handle things effectively, or even worry about things going “right.” As a learned habit, it can be unlearned, but it takes some work and a different perspective on one's thoughts.

I can hear you say, “but what about those times when I worry about

something and it turns out to be true?” That may happen occasionally, but have all the hours or lost sleep and days of anxiety added to the quality of your life? Probably not. Has the worry prevented the feared outcome from happening? No. Has the worried made you miss the positive aspects of the situation? Probably.

As a recovering worrier, I know better than to try to talk someone out of worry by being logical and factual. Worry is a symptom of anxiety and anxiety is often about things that don't make sense. Worriers will even say, “I know this probably won't happen, but I can't help but worry about it.” Yes, you can. We can learn to direct our thoughts and influence our emotional responses to situations.

How about the numerous times you've worried about something only to find out you had nothing to worry about and everything turned out alright? For some reason we don't give these times as much notice as when we were “right” about the bad thing that was going to happen and did. That's

because we tend to look for things to confirm what we believe. If we believe something is wrong or is going to go wrong, we'll unconsciously scan the environment for “proof” of what we believe.

Intense and frequent worry can also act as a self-fulfilling prophecy, also bringing about the thing we're dreading. Now, I'm not saying that worry about getting cancer can give you  
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“To reduce stress, we're appointing you the Designated Worrier for the entire office. Here's today's list.”

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## Recovering Worrier Cont'd from page 1

cancer, but that worrying that you're going to "freeze" up at a job interview can cause you to do that. When you worry about things going wrong, it's like you're creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Fortunately, the same holds true for worrying about things going right. This kind of constructive, creative mental rehearsal is very powerful and can be harnessed for your benefit. Think of it as having your own private superpower. To cultivate "positive worry" try imagining in vivid detail a situation that might usually make you nervous, like public speaking. Instead of focusing on how you're going to be nervous, freeze up or forget your speech, imagine instead being calm and confident, the words flowing out of you eloquently, then picture the inspiration and admiration in the eyes of the audience. Repeat a thousand times or as long as it takes you to start believing that this could be possible. It works. I know. I've done it and I can teach it too.

### Am I a Worry Wart?

1. Do you have trouble turning off your thoughts?
2. Do you spend more than 30% of your time worrying?
3. Have you ever experienced "paralysis by analysis"?
4. Do you have frequent tension headaches?
5. Are you slow to come down from high stress situations?
6. Do you worry about the same few things vs. a wide array of things?
7. Have your friends or family ever told you "you think too much"?
8. Do you often think about what could go wrong in a new situation?
9. Are you preoccupied with the future and thinking about "what if's"?

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**"I'll be home late. I've joined a support group for women who need a reason to stay at work until the house is picked up and dinner is on the table."**

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**Worry Wart**

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You worry that the light is red  
you worry what's beneath your bed  
you worry 'bout what I just said  
you're a worry, worry wart.

You worry about gravity and all the changes you see,  
the earth is sucking constantly,  
you're a worry, worry wart.

Why don't you lighten up?  
Why don't you lighten up?

It's alright, alright everybody got to run and hide,  
alright, alright, worry worry wart.

You worry that you're not thought bright  
you worry that they might be right  
someone's gone and dimmed the lights  
worry, worry wart.

You worry when someone's calling  
they know your libido's stalling  
status needs an overhauling  
worry, worry wart.

You worry that it goes slow  
you worry that it seems so low  
you cant' stop that ebb and flow  
you're a worry, worry wart.

Why don't you lighten up  
why don't you lighten up  
it's alright, alright, everybody got to run and hide  
worry, worry wart.

Mirror, mirror on the wall  
who's the most worried of all  
mirror, mirror hey, you got me talking to myself

Why don't you lighten up  
why don't you lighten up?

You worry that they trade inside  
you'll wake up the earth is fried  
sometimes my worries are justified

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***The Stress Doctor is IN!!!***

“YOU PROBABLY  
WOULDN'T WORRY  
ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE  
THINK OF YOU IF YOU  
COULD KNOW HOW  
SELDOM THEY DO.”  
OLIN MILLER

“THAT'S THE SECRET  
TO LIFE... REPLACE  
ONE WORRY WITH  
ANOTHER....”  
CHARLES M. SCHULZ

“SOMETIMES I WORRY  
ABOUT BEING A  
SUCCESS IN A  
MEDIocre WORLD.”  
LILY TOMLIN

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**“I’m afraid you caught me at a bad time...  
somewhere between college and retirement!”**

**ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.**

LICENSED CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

- 14 years experience gently helping individuals, couples and groups resolve personal problems, manage stress, and reach their full potential.
- Specializing in Women’s Issues and Stress Management

**Worriers Welcome!**

Call (618) 549-5935 to set up an appointment

Visit our website at [www.GotStressGetHelp.com](http://www.GotStressGetHelp.com)

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## WHAT ME, WORRY?

“When you look at yourself from a universal standpoint, something inside always reminds or informs you that there are bigger and better things to worry about.” — Albert Einstein

“The reason why worry kills more people than work is that more people worry than work.” — Robert Frost

“If you can't sleep, then get up and do something instead of lying there and worrying. It's the worry that gets you, not the loss of sleep.” — Dale Carnegie

“Worry is a misuse of imagination.” — Dan Zadra