

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

WHAT TO DO ABOUT WORRYING

Chronic worrying is a mental habit you can break.

Occasional worry or anxiety is a normal part of life. At times we might worry about our children, finances, health, job, and family. Worrying can even be helpful if it motivates us to take action and solve a specific problem. But when worrying becomes excessive, it can take a toll on one's physical and emotional health.

No one has control over the future or can predict everything that is going to happen. But people who worry too much tend to imagine worst-case scenarios and "what ifs" that magnify their fears. These fears can easily spiral into high levels of anxiety and dread. This emotional distress may then result in physical symptoms such as irritable bowel, headaches, insomnia, and other medical problems, creating a vicious cycle.

Breaking a habit of worrying takes practice. Methods of self-help involve learning to stay calm and replacing negative thoughts with positive ones. Here are some tips:

- **Is the problem that you're worrying about a problem that you can solve? If so, come up with concrete steps for dealing with it.**
- **If the situation you worry about is a "what if" type of situation, such as "What if my child gets into a car accident?," recognize that this is not a solvable problem, but a thought that causes anxiety.**
- **Challenge your assumptions. This can be a useful exercise to calm yourself and realize that you can handle whatever the worst case scenario might be.**
- **Focus on the present rather than on the past or future. The only thing you really have control over is how you will react to what happens today.**

Sometimes excessive worrying is a symptom of generalized anxiety disorder, or GAD. If you find that you have difficulty controlling anxiety and worrying, contact a mental health professional for help.

