

CHAPTER 9

Hanging Out with Worry

Now you have another outsmarting Worry technique: acknowledging, observing and accepting what you are thinking and feeling, without trying to make it go away.



That's called being Mindful.

Mindfulness is a term used to describe a certain way of thinking and being in the world. Mindfulness activities help you focus on the present moment – right now – without judging that moment or leaping to conclusions about it. Mindfulness helps you feel calmer, and ultimately makes it easier to shift your attention away from troubling things, including Worries.

Mindfulness activities help you practice this way of thinking: acknowledging, observing and accepting (rather than judging, leaping to conclusions, and reacting – which is the typical mode

for most of us). They do need to be practiced – every day if possible – to teach your brain to smoothly shift away from fretful Worry into this calm, accepting mode.

It works best to practice initially when you aren't worried. Then, as you get more used to being Mindful, you can start to use the techniques when you are worried, too.

There are a ton of Mindfulness activities to help you learn this way of thinking. You'll find them online or in books.

Here are two to get you started:

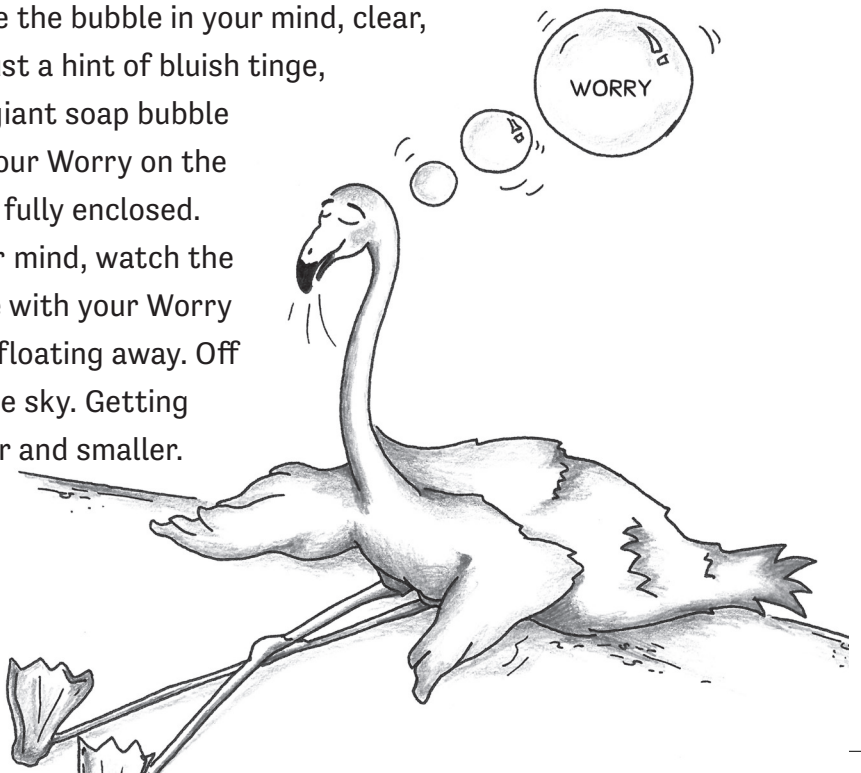
Follow Your Senses...

- ↪ Sit comfortably with your back straight and your arms relaxed.
- ↪ Take three slow breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- ↪ Close your eyes.
- ↪ Pick one of your senses, perhaps hearing.
- ↪ Focus on the first sound you hear. Maybe it's the fan running the heating or cooling system in whatever room you are in. Pay attention to that sound. Really listen to it. Let all the other sounds you hear fade into the background while keeping that fan noise right at the front of your awareness.
- ↪ If a thought pops into your head, notice what is happening by whispering, "thinking" or "wandering," and then let the thought go. Re-focus on the sound.
- ↪ Stay aware of the fan noise for a few minutes – telling yourself, "wandering" when you need to – then broaden your focus. Keep your eyes closed and again pay attention. What else do you hear?

- ~> Pick another sound and zoom in on it.
- ~> Focus on that next sound – maybe the traffic outside. Concentrate on the new sound.
- ~> If you become aware of other noises, including the first sound you were paying attention to, simply make note of it ("fan") and then turn your attention back to the traffic.
- ~> After a few minutes, breathe deeply and open your eyes.

Away in a Bubble...

- ~> Sit comfortably with your back straight and arms relaxed.
- ~> Breathe slowly and deeply three times, in through your nose and out through your mouth. As you are breathing, close your eyes.
- ~> Think of a Worry, or some other feeling that is bothering you.
- ~> Imagine a bubble forming around your Worry, fully enclosing it.
- ~> Picture the bubble in your mind, clear, with just a hint of bluish tinge, like a giant soap bubble with your Worry on the inside, fully enclosed.
- ~> In your mind, watch the bubble with your Worry inside floating away. Off into the sky. Getting smaller and smaller.



- ↪ Keep your eyes closed as you imagine the bubble drifting in the breeze, so small you can barely see it.
- ↪ Whisper goodbye to the bubble, and let it continue to float away.
- ↪ Take two more breaths and when you are ready, open your eyes.

Being Mindful helps you be less reactive to uncomfortable thoughts and feelings, including thoughts and feelings triggered by Worry. Mindfulness helps you remember that thoughts and feelings come and go, and that there is no need to debate, battle against or avoid them.

Mindfulness helps you outsmart Worry by just hanging out with it.



Look at Worry. What a fascinating creature. Jumping up and down. Making all sorts of noise.



Ho hum. Same thing over and over. Worry is predictable. Not so fascinating after all.

No need to hang out and keep watching. There are more interesting things to do.

