The Worry Tree

We often have worries that seem to pull focus away from our day to day life. You may feel out of control, or feel like you need to keep worrying because it feels useful – or that bad things might happen if you stop.

There are always practical steps we can take that will make us feel more in control of our worries. This worry tree may help you get to the bottom of those intrusive thoughts that pull focus away from day to day life.

When using the tree, it's helpful to think about the kind of worry you have. Worries can often be separated into two categories: hypothetical situations and current problems.

Hypothetical situations are those "what if...?" thoughts about some terrible event that might happen. "My partner is late home from work – what if they've had an accident?" or "The ozone layer has holes – what if the end of the world happens soon?".

These thoughts are usually followed by imagining what would happen in those worst-case scenarios. These kind of worries can cause us a lot of anxiety, when there is perhaps little or nothing we can do about that situation.

Current problems are those worries that relate to a real situation, that we CAN do something about. In which case, we can decide what to do, when and how – which will be much more helpful than just continually worrying about it.

After using the tree, try writing down the worry and its outcome. If you feel the worry creeping back in, you can remind yourself of the decision you made, and bring your focus back to the present.

"What am I worrying about?"

"Can I do anything about it?"

No → Yes

Let the worry go → Change your focus

Make a plan → What? When? How?

Now? → Do it! → Let the worry go → Change your focus

Later? → Schedule It! → Let the worry go → Change your focus

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