## 8 worrying is worthless

## for you to know

It is common for people to worry about things that they feel anxious about. However, all the time and energy that is spent in worry is actually wasted. When you try to alleviate anxiety by worrying, all you do is make the anxiety grow stronger.

Most people don't realize why they worry. They think worrying is something that just happens. Or they say they "have to" worry about something. That is not true, of course. Usually we begin to worry because we feel anxious about a situation and we want to do something to try to prevent a negative outcome. If it is a situation that we have little or no control over, there is not much we can do. Not being able to do anything brings up feelings of helplessness, which trigger worry. Worrying is something we can do. When we worry, we may feel we are doing something to try to control the situation.

People have worried about things for centuries, but it has never once had a positive effect on the outcome of a situation. If there were any possible way that worrying would help you to relieve anxiety, there would be an exercise in this book teaching you how to worry and suggesting that you practice it diligently as both prevention and intervention.

What worrying does do is to drain you, both emotionally and physically. That makes your situation worse because you have less energy to handle whatever it is that is going on. Then your anxiety level goes up again because you feel even more helpless.

## directions

Rate your present anxiety level on the scale below.

7 8 9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 10 Completely Moderately Highly peaceful anxious anxious

Now think of a current situation that is bringing up feelings of anxiety for you. Set a timer for five minutes or keep an eye on a clock. Spend the next five minutes worrying about this situation. Use all of your skills and past experience in worrying to worry as hard as you can. Think about all the negative ways this situation could turn out. Put as much emotional and physical energy as you can into worrying. Imagine you will be graded on how well you can worry, and try to worry hard enough to get an A+.

After the five minutes is up, rate your anxiety level again on the scale below.

0 1 2 3 6 7 8 9 10 4 5 Completely Moderately Highly peaceful anxious anxious

## more to do

What was it like to spend five minutes purposely worrying hard about something?
How did this purposeful worrying affect your anxiety level?
What happens to your body and your mind when you worry so hard?
Describe any way that the worrying you just did will have a positive effect on the outcome of the situation.
Describe something you could do instead of worrying that would be more productive or would help you feel better.