

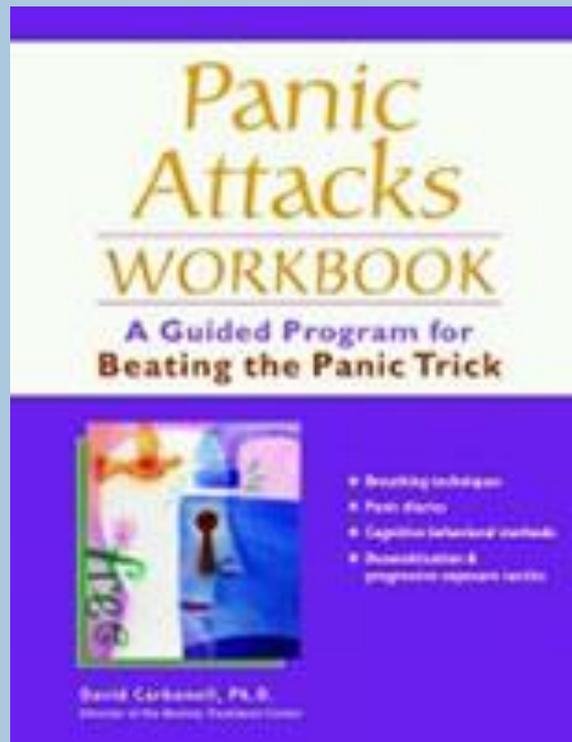
# ACCEPTANCE BASED TREATMENT OF GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

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# FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

## Book Royalties



# KEY POINTS

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder is a common, solvable problem
- Chronic Worry is the main symptom of GAD
- People often fail to solve this problem because they struggle against worry, rather than learn to work with it
- Working with, rather than against, is the path out of this problem

# WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER?

- Excessive, chronic worry about various topics
- The equation of doubt with danger
- Physical sensations and somatic complaints
- Efforts to stop the worrying
- The efforts to stop worrying usually fail, and make it worse.

# ORDINARY VS. GAD WORRY

## Ordinary Worry

- Leads you to planning and problem solving
- Attention is focused on important issues
- Little interference with ordinary activities
- Ends with choices made & action taken
- Worry is incidental to your life

## Chronic Worry

- Interferes with problem solving and planning
- Attention is focused on unlikely disasters
- Worry crowds out ordinary activities
- Worries don't get solved, just repeated, then replaced by other worries
- Worry is the focus of your life

## Is it GAD Worry? A quick check

- Does the problem exist now?
- Can I do something to change it now?

The client's aversion to uncertainty will become apparent here

# How Chronic Worry Works: Diagram the Worry Sentence

What if...?

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The Catastrophe Clause

# The Worry Trick

- I experience Doubt...
- And treat it like Danger
- Two kinds of attempted solutions
  - Disarm the worry by disproving it
  - “Stop worrying”
- Both result in more, not less, worry
- The goal: accept uncertainty

# The Two sided Relationship with Chronic Worry

## ON THE ONE HAND...

- You regard worry thoughts as if they were accurate predictions of the future
- You try to prove the feared event won't happen.
- You fail to prove it because you can't prove a negative
- You treat the failure to disprove the thought as evidence that it will happen
- Result: more worry

## ON THE OTHER HAND...

- You fear that worry will kill you, drive you insane, or otherwise ruin your life
- You treat worry as a dangerous object: you try to get rid of it
- You get rid of objects by throwing them away; when you try that with worries, it energizes them
- Result: more worry

## How people try to “reason” with GAD worry,

- Internet “research”
- “think positive”
- Cognitive Restructuring run amok
- Repetitive requests for specific reassurance
- Search for evidence to disprove fears
- Consult experts but can’t accept response

# How people try to stop worrying

- Distraction
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Rituals and Superstitions
- Avoidance of cues and reminders
- Seek a lot of general reassurance (tell me I'll be OK)
- Thought Stopping

# Uncle Argument and Your Relationship with Worry

- You don't have problems you worry about
- You have the problem of worrying
- Treatments and self help methods that aim principally at the **content** of your worries often miss the point, and make things worse
- You'll make better progress when you target the relationship you have with your worry

# Acceptance based approach to worry

- ❑ You can start by recognizing that we don't control our thoughts, and it's usually unhelpful and counterproductive to try
- ❑ Your brain is like a TV set, with no off switch, channel selector, or volume control. If you rage against the sound, things just seem worse
- ❑ We don't have to correct irrational thoughts, nor do we need to achieve certainty
- ❑ We just have to live with irrationality and uncertainty. All of us.



# Become more aware of the voice of worry

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- ❑ It gets its power from its subliminal nature, from operating behind the scenes
- ❑ Catching it in the act – tic tacs
- ❑ Enlist your family in helping detect this in conversation
- ❑ More formal observation – use the worry journal to record your observations in the moment of worry

# The Recovery path:

## A new relationship with worry

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- ❑ Chronic Worry is a Heckler
- ❑ It's not an accurate warning you need to heed
- ❑ Nor is it a threat to your well being that you desperately need to silence
- ❑ You can change the way you relate to Chronic worry by treating it like a heckler
  - ❑ Not a threat
  - ❑ Not a valid warning of trouble either

# New responses to the “What if...” Invitation

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- ❑ For some people, it's enough to notice the “what if...”, and move on.
- ❑ Others need a more active response
- ❑ Guideline for active responses: work **with** the worry, rather than against it

# Active Responses to GAD Worry

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- ❑ Keep a list of the thoughts
- ❑ Double Down/Humor the thought
- ❑ Haiku
- ❑ Sing a dreadful song
- ❑ Write a news story about the awful event
- ❑ Worry in a different language
- ❑ Take your worries for a walk

# Your daily workout: Worry Appointments

- ✓ Schedule your worry, 2x/day for 10 minutes
- ✓ Give worry your exclusive focus
- ✓ This time is for pure worry. Don't brainstorm, problem solve, or soothe yourself – just worry
- ✓ Do this out loud, standing, in front of mirror
- ✓ Coupled with postponing, or forced choice

# Are you motivated to worry?

## The “Advantages” of Worry

- It helps if I expect the worst
- If I worry about something, I might prevent it from happening
- If something bad happens and I hadn't worried about it, I'll feel guilty
- Worry shows that I care

These beliefs can make you more prone to worry

# General Maintenance

- Regular cardiovascular exercise
- Regular practice of a simple relaxation or meditation
- Regular use of Worry Appointments
- Sleep hygiene (permissive, not prescriptive, approach)
- Possible reduction in intake of sugars and/or caffeine
- Journal
- Weekly conversation with support person, not for reassurance, but to review your current relationship with worry

# In Summary...

- GAD is common, and treatable
- People often fail to solve the problem of GAD, not because they're defective, but because they instinctively use methods that make things worse rather than better
- Methods based on acceptance, rather than resistance, are the key.

# THAT'S ALL, FOLKS!

Thanks for coming!

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