tackling the unspoken issues

Why we worry

• Why we worry
• Matthew 5
• How to worry less!
• What do you want to hear about?

Introduction

• “One of the hardest verses in the Bible is ‘Do not worry – Matthew 6:25.’” J John
• Worry does not remove tomorrow of its sorrows, but today of its joy.” Corrie Ten Boom
• “I’ve developed a new philosophy! I only dread one day at a time…” Charlie Brown (Schultz)

Why we worry

• Neuroticism
  – O.C.E.A.N. – big five
• Family wisdom
  – “Better safe than sorry”
  – What were yours???
• Because we need to at times...
• Because we think it helps...

The Process of Worry

• Driving My Car
  – Managing The City
• Different Cars
  – Worry Themes
• Rat Runs
  – Worry Work
• Long Cuts
  – Worry Rules
Understanding My Worry

• A bomb has gone off
• After the bomb
• Common Worry Themes
  – What are yours?
  – Money
  – Relationships
  – Health
  – Faith

Generalised Anxiety Disorder

• Excessive (out of proportion) worry that the person finds it difficult to control
• Not confined to a particular problem – more of a tendency to worry
• Accompanied by three or more of these symptoms:
  – restlessness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscular tension and sleep disturbance
• Causes “significant” distress, meaning you can no longer do things you did before
• Treatment: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Antidepressants

Worry and the Body

• Controlled Breathing
  – 15 breaths per minute
  – Pauses between each breath in and out

• Sleep Hygiene
  – Caffeine
  – Boundary activities
  – Bedroom activities
  – Babies
  – Night-time waking
  – Start with a regular waking time!

Worry and the Brain - 1

• Vicious Flowers
  – Worry as a process and not as an individual problem
  – Get worry out by the root – how we respond to triggers

Worry and the Brain - 2

The Worry Pendulum

Trying not to worry

Outright panic

My little boy might be struggling at school. But I have been told he is fine, so I will try not to worry. Everything will be OK. Take some deep breaths.

He might be being bullied, or have dyslexia. He could even be being abused!! Oh no, that’s terrible. I can feel myself starting to panic.

If I lose my job, I could lose my house. My spouse will never stay with me. I may never see my children again. My life is over and there is no going back.

Trying not to worry

Trying not to panic

Trying not to worry

Trying not to panic
Worry about Worry

• If I worry too much...
  ...it will get out of control?
  ...I will be unable to think
  ...I will be condemned to a life of anxiety
  ...I am weak / others will think of me as weak
  ...it means I lack confidence
• Predicts Severity of Worry

Worry Fuel - 1
[what drives the pendulum]

• Core Worry Rules
  — Shoulds, Musts, Oughts
  — I should be able to do this / must
  — I will never be asked to do / ought to do a good job
  — Always/Nevers
  — Things never work out for me / always go wrong
  — If/Then
  — If I have lots of friends then I will feel good
• Flat-Earth Theory
  — Protective or prohibitive?

Worry Fuel - 2
[what drives the pendulum]

• Golden Worry Rules
  — Worry aids problem-solving
  — Worry helps to motivate
  — Worrying prevents things going wrong
  — Worry protects me from difficult emotions if things go wrong
  — Worry makes for nicer people
• See worry for what it is!
  — An addiction?

Rules Review

• Core Worry Rules
  — Shoulds, Musts, Oughts
  — Always/Nevers
  — If/Then
• Golden Worry Rules
  — Worry aids problem-solving
  — Worry helps to motivate
  — Worrying prevents things going wrong
  — Worry protects me from difficult emotions if things go wrong
  — Worry makes for nicer people
Which of these have you seen in yourself / others? What are your feelings about this?

A word of compassion

• Your responsibility, but maybe not your fault
• Grew up over time and will take time to unwind
• Watch out for core worry rules
  — I ought not to have...
  — I will never get better...
  — If must be healed now...

Breaking the Rules

• Write them down
• Examine the logic
• Challenge the benefits
• Taking a risk [start small!]
My Faith and My Worry

Dear Mind and Soul,

I wonder if I could ask you a question about something that has been bothering me regarding what some Christians have said to me. I've had a lot of Christians come up to me and say things like, “God doesn’t want us to be in anxiety, he’s created us for freedom”, or “The Bible says do not be anxious over anything”, or even “If we are not living in joy it’s because we aren’t resting in the Father’s arms and accepting his fatherhood over us”.

I've really struggled with some of these comments, which have either been preached or passed my way during my illness. I've known the loving arms of God as my Father for many years, and yet, I've had this illness and it’s led me to feelings of guilt sometimes. I know that isn’t right either, but I just feel uncomfortable with what some people are saying and I don’t believe it’s all as simple as they’re preaching. What's the correct response as a Christian to the comments I've received? I'd be glad of your advice or point of view.

Regards, Name Withheld

Worry in the Bible

- Read Matthew 6v25-34
- What is Jesus’ advice about worry?

Matthew 6v25-34

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life…

Not life threatening

Grow in faith

Don’t Run

Trust God

Which type of worry?

- TODAY
  - Solvable Worry
    - Solution now or in the near future
    - We need to stop worrying and start DOING something
    - Problem solving skills will help

- TOMORROW
  - Floating Worry
    - No real solution, or far in the future
    - There is nothing that can be DONE
    - What if’s
    - We need to stop worrying and...

Two types of Worry

What types of worries are these?

- Do I have enough petrol in the car to make that journey?
- If I were to move to London, would I make any friends?
- Am I doing enough regular exercise?
- Have I committed an unforgivable sin?
- Do I need to read my essay through again?
- Does Sally really like me or not?
- Can I pay my gas bill this month?

Certainty as impossible

Christian FAITH is not obvious...

Certainty as unwise

“...not seen and yet have believed” in 20v29

Certainty as unhelpful

- Searching for it increases doubt!

Faith and Certainty

- The Unforgivable Sin
  - Mt 12v31, Mk 3v29
  - “But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.”

1. Theology for leaders, about Satan, with
2. Psychology: blasphemes or ‘feels as if has...’, super-safe = almost certainty not!
Trying not to worry

feel? Did your feared events happen?

[fear might happen but note that some risk will remain]

Disadvantages of each solution

Rule nothing out for now as possible

Identify the problem. Define it as clearly possible

1. Brainstorm as many solutions as possible. Rule nothing out for now
2. Look at the Advantages and Disadvantages of each solution
3. Choose one of the solutions. List what you fear might happen
4. Think of some practical steps you can take (but note that some risk will remain)
5. Carry out the chosen solution. What happened?
6. Reflect on what happened. How did it feel? Did your feared events happen? What does this tell you?

Making new appraisals

Problem solving

• Overly positive beliefs [Rules] about uncertainty
  - Being uncertain is an unpleasant experience
  - You should act only when you are absolutely certain
  - Better safe than sorry
  - I can’t be safe when I am not sure
  - If I am sure, then I can predict bad things and so prevent them

Reflect on what happened. How did it feel? Carry out the chosen solution. What happened?

Think of some practical steps you can take (but note that some risk will remain)

Chose one of the solutions. List what you feel? Did your feared events happen? What does this tell you?

Identifying the problem. Define it as clearly possible

1. Brainstorm as many solutions as possible. Rule nothing out for now
2. Look at the Advantages and Disadvantages of each solution
3. Choose one of the solutions. List what you fear might happen
4. Think of some practical steps you can take (but note that some risk will remain)
5. Carry out the chosen solution. What happened?
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Present Contemplation
[When there is no solution]

- The opposite of ‘being on automatic pilot’
- Living in the present, not the past or future
- Contemplating
  - God
  - Our relationship to Him
  - Our worry

The Five Principles

- Be non-judgemental
  - Even if the distressing thought is something you would normally regard as wrong or sinful, for now do not judge it as such.
- Be patient
  - Allow the thought to stay in your mind.
- Be a beginner
  - Be willing to let go of automatic ways of thinking.
- Be trusting
  - Let God help you to understand.
- Be accepting
  - Give up the need to control.

Things that get in the way

- Seemingly relevant
  - Why is this happening to me?
  - Am I doing this right?
  - How long will this take – is this long enough?
- Practice makes perfect and makes you less concerned...

The journey out of worry
[an illustration from motor-sport]

- Plan your route
  - Timescale, Time commitment
- Keep an eye on the terrain
  - Solve the solvable problems
- Beware of overheating
  - Learn ways to cool down
  - Keep an eye on the dashboard
  - Keep healthy, eat well
- Driving Companions
  - Coaches and fans
- Are we nearly there yet?
  - Be patient!

Journey with God

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalm 139v23-4

Worry

Dr Rob Waller
Director, Mind and Soul :: Consultant Psychiatrist, NHS Lothian

www.mindandsoul.info/worry