

# Mindful Monday, July 20, 2020

*"That the birds of worry and care fly over your head, this you cannot change,  
but that they build nests in your hair, this you can prevent."*

- Chinese Proverb

We all worry. Worry, it seems, is part of being human. At times, the way we worry may give small things a big shadow (to quote a Swedish Proverb). The good news is that we can learn to manage our worries so they do not cause us to be counterproductive or trap us in a cycle of negative thinking. Below are two strategies to try that may help you negate worrisome thoughts. One from a woman who swims with sharks and one that can help reduce anxiety by scheduling time to be worried.

**ACT or ACCEPT** (Jen Schumacher was a guest on the Cindra Kamphoff High Performance Mindset Summit, the information below was discussed in her episode. The entire interview can be found [here](#))

Jen Schumacher is the Director of Performance Psychology at the Centre for Enhanced Performance at the United States Military Academy. She is also a marathon swimmer who is occasionally confronted by sharks as she completes her long open water swims. She is afraid of sharks and so when she worries about what will happen if she encounters one, she uses the following activity to help diminish her worries. It is called **Act or Accept**.

- 01 Make a list of all the things going on in your life.
- 02 Cross out everything you have control over.
- 03 For the elements that remain, identify if there are **ACTIONS** you can take to manage them or if you need to work on **ACCEPTING** that you cannot control them and therefore need to work on letting them go.

In Amy's case when it came to her fear of sharks, she took action to learn as much as she could about shark behavior and then she created if/then statements she could tell herself so she would be prepared when she saw a shark. She learned that if sharks attack, they do so from behind and at an approaching speed of about 40 miles an hour. When she did see a shark near her it was swimming very slowly and she could see it. Her research and prepared if/then statements helped her realize that the shark was not going to attack her, and she was able to enjoy the moment of having the shark near her while she swam.

Several studies have demonstrated that scheduling a specific worry time each day helps to reduce anxiety. Research in this area has shown this practice can reduce worry and anxiety in roughly two weeks.

## Schedule "Worry Time"

To get started, follow the steps below.

- 01 Set aside a specific time of day to worry (15 – 30 minutes). Mark this in your calendar or add it to your daily schedule.
- 02 If you find that you are worrying outside of this window, remind yourself that your worry time is scheduled for later and you can address those worries at that time. Try to redirect your thoughts.
- 03 When it is time for your scheduled worry time, worry away. You may want to write your concerns down or you may just want to think about them.
- 04 When the scheduled worry time is over, tell yourself it is time to return to your regular life and let your worries go. With practice (it may take some time, roughly 2 weeks) this activity may help you contain your worries to 30 minutes as each day. You may find it helpful to finish your session with a few deep breaths to help you reset and move forward.

To view a more detailed overview of this practice you may wish to review the articles below:

[A simple but effective trick to stop worrying so much \(Psychology Today\)](#)

[Psychology Tools: Schedule "Worry Time"](#)

*"Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its joy."*

-Leo F. Buscaglia