

## EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: MAKING WORRY WORK

How much should I worry about my job, my kids, my athletic performance—what she said—what he said ... We all worry about something from time to time. Some of us are perceived as too optimistic, while some are perceived as too pessimistic. Who is to say what is the right amount of worry? Here's what science tells us:

*Research has shown that students and athletes who experienced some anxiety actually displayed improved performance on tests or while participating in competitive sports. Likewise, some degree of anxiety in those who have a good working memory may actually enhance performance on cognitive tests – from [The Benefits of Anxiety and Nervousness](#).*

Whether worry is a good thing, or well—worrisome—is situational. Some situations *require* worrying and that worry motivates us to act. Some situations cause us to worry unrealistically – “Am I getting fired?” Maybe, but what makes you think so, and more importantly, what can you do about it? Will I win the race? Maybe. Have you done the required hard work and training? Do you know the competition?

**The best response to worrying is self-reflection and reality testing.**

Worry can motivate you to a point, and it can also derail you. This is all situational. Your most important strategy is to check out how realistic your worry is. Reality test it. Is there actually a threat? If the answer is yes, do the work you need to do to overcome the threat. Make a plan. Write it out. Get input from a trusted adviser.

If the answer is no, and especially if you are tipping from worry into anxiety, use the same techniques you are hopefully using anyway to maintain your vitality and use them to manage your anxiety:

- Meditate
- Bio feedback
- Get enough sleep (get more sleep, not more caffeine)
- Avoid turning to alcohol or (unhealthy) comfort food
- Go for a run or a bike ride, play basketball, listen to music, dance, paint, engage in some other form of art—do whatever you do to calm your mind

Once you have assessed the situation you are worrying about and taken appropriate action, remember to engage in the vitality practices above to ensure that worry and anxiety don't derail your performance.

Consider the difference between worry (cognitive), stress (physical), and anxiety (cognitive and physical and, sometimes, occurs in the absence of an actual threat). See, [The New York Times: The difference between worry, stress, and anxiety](#).

*How has worry helped or hurt your performance (athletic, work, relationships ... )? How can you adjust your approach to worry so that it is useful and not detrimental?*

### Further reading

- [The surprising upsides of worrying - BBC Future](#)