

## Don't Worry, Be Happy!

Someone asked me the other day how I'd managed to train myself not to worry. Truthfully, I'm not completely sure. It didn't happen overnight. It was the result of a series of insights, knowledge acquired and decisions made along the path of life.

But make no mistake; it wasn't accidental. I was clinically depressed for 30 years, starting at around age 4 or 5.

That is likely when the worry loop started for me. In my 30s there came a point when I realized that worry was making me more depressed and often physically sick so I began to look for solutions.



Here is what I've learned so far (and I'm still working at this): Me at 3 before the worry started.

### **Lesson #1 – Worry is caused by fear and action cancels fear every time.**

When I was a kid, I suffered from what I call school night insomnia. I would lie awake for hours in a panic about what was going to happen to me the next day when my teacher found out I hadn't done my homework. In order to distract myself I would sneak into the bathroom and read mysteries, scrutinize my face in the mirror and chronicle its shortcomings or, when I was really desperate, I would rearrange the items in my father's medicine chest alphabetically (he *hated* that!) And in all those years of suffering from lack of sleep not once, NOT ONCE did it occur to me to sneak into the bathroom and...you guessed it...DO MY HOMEWORK!

### **Lesson #2 – Worry is using your imagination to attract something you DON'T want.**

When I first heard my spiritual teacher Esther Hicks say this I felt electrified, in a good way. It really rang true for me. Those of us who are adept at worrying could put Stephen King to shame with our imagined horror scenes. The Law of Attraction works like this: you attract more of what you focus on (which, by the way, is why I don't read King's novels). If you don't want to attract it, do everything you can to distract yourself from thinking about it. Some of my tools include meditation, watching a movie or TV show, playing online Scrabble (this one's great because I can do it on my cell phone while in bed), or tapping into memories that make me happy. What are some of your tools?

### **Lesson #3 - Is everything okay right this minute?**

The answer to this is most often yes. Worry is always about the future.

### **Lesson #4 – Do you have any control over what you're worried about?**

If the answer is no, then what the heck are you doing? If it never happens, you've made yourself sick for no reason. If it DOES happen, then you've not only suffered during the actual event but all the minutes/hours/days you spent worrying about it.



I've lived in earthquake country for over two decades. People ask me, "How can you do that? Aren't you scared?" and the answer is no. I grew up in Massachusetts and can remember many times in my childhood when we had to "batten down the hatches" because a Nor'easter was coming. It was terrifying. For days I would wonder about when it would hit and whether it would take the roof off the house or worse. What I like about earthquakes is that there is no warning. They last for a short period of time and once the earth stops shaking you're either dead or you're not. I've been in two—one minor and one major and so far so good.

The funny thing about worry is that we use it as a way to comfort ourselves and it has just the opposite effect. Our fear drives us to seek control and we think that's what we are doing when we worry but what we continually come to face with is our utter lack of control. So my final lesson (so far) is this one:

#### Lesson #5 – **Surrender**

We are all powerless over people, places and things. Once you truly get that to your very core, you will find it much easier to give up worrying because, if you're honest with yourself, nearly everything you obsess about are things over which you have no power. If you are worried about something over which you DO have power, then refer to Lesson #1.