

ARE YOUR WORRIES FUNCTIONAL OR CLINICAL?



The word 'worry' pops up in conversation fairly frequently. Some people refer to themselves as 'worrywarts' or say that they 'worry all the time, and even worry about not having something to worry about if there's nothing going on'. This may apply to you, someone in your family, or at work; we all know a chronic worrier.

If you worry about your loved ones when they are away from home or dealing with an issue, worry about the state of the planet and where it could all be going, or worry about the economic situation in the country and in the world, you aren't alone.



FUNCTIONAL WORRY

There is more than one type of worry though, and it is important to know how to deal with each. As explained in another article on anxiety, a degree of worry can be functional – think of it as 'functional fear'. This type of 'worry' is realistic and results in a rational action. For example, a degree of worry will make you aware of what you spend every month and also make you plan for your retirement. You can also go through a phase of worry when something unexpected and significant is happening in your life – a relocation, promotion, marriage, birth of a child, new responsibilities or any big change. In the case of a traumatic event, worry is a symptom and the trauma should be addressed.



CLINICAL WORRY

The other kind of worry – what you can think of as 'clinical worry' because it becomes dysfunctional if left untreated – is one of the core features in a recognised anxiety condition known as generalised anxiety disorder (GAD). This should formally be confirmed by a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist. This kind of worry becomes a dysfunctional mental habit that affects how you function at work and in your relationships. Clinical worry is like a vicious cycle of over-thinking – usually assuming the worst case in any real or imagined scenario. It is exhausting and uncontrollable when it becomes an actual disorder (GAD).

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