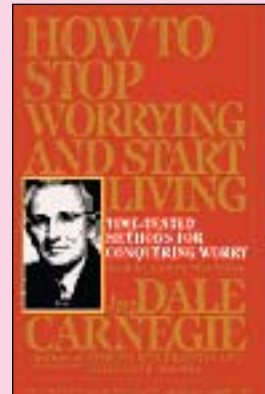


# How to Stop Worrying and Start Living



**Time-Tested Methods for Conquering Worry**  
by Dale Carnegie  
Pocket Books, 1985 (Originally from 1944)

## Overview

Dale Carnegie, well-known author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, compiles time tested wisdom in this book of principles on how to avoid worrying about problems that you generally can't affect. This book is filled with common sense anecdotes from people who have achieved peace and happiness, and from the sayings of philosophers, business leaders and others. Carnegie presents these ideas in an easy-to-understand format. Even though most of the book is a series of stories about people overcoming difficulties, there is a lot of useful information here.

## Key ideas

Learn to accept and cooperate with the inevitable, and avoid worrying about either the past or the future. Put past mistakes behind you and move on. Don't concern yourself with minor things. Change your mental attitude and stay positive.

Live in 'daytight' compartments (segments) in which you focus on the present and what you can do today. Don't carry over too much to the next compartment. Today is your most precious possession, don't waste it.

You will worry less if you analyze the problem so you can do something about it. Get busy with something else; preferably something constructive. This technique works well, because the human mind cannot think of more than one thing at a time.

Carnegie recommends that you review the basic principles in this book and think about how you can apply them. Keep a diary showing how and when you used the various ideas, and review your progress periodically. Consider how to improve the way you employ these principles, so that you will worry less and less.

Put the past behind you and focus on the present: Often when you worry you are thinking about the past and blaming yourself for what you have done wrong. On the other hand, do not become anxious about the future: Thinking about the future can be another source of worry. While it's important to carefully think about and plan for future developments, don't become too anxious about it.

Another way to avoid worrying is to analyze your situation and determine what is the worst that could possibly happen. Accept the possibility, but at the same time focus your time and energy on trying to 'improve upon the worst.' This approach works well because it provides a psychological release of energy. When you accept the worst, you have nothing more to lose. Do what you can to improve upon the situation, and move on. Certainly, fight hard if you can change the situation. But if you can't, put it in the past and move on.

It is a good idea to be aware of the dangers of worry itself. When you worry, you become tense and nervous, and so worry actually affects your bodily chemistry. It can produce illness and ulcers. One Mayo Clinic study showed that about a third of the business executives studied, who had an average age of 44, suffered from three ailments associated with high-tension heart disease, ulcers and high blood pressure. So worrying is truly dangerous for your health. Remind yourself of how costly worry can be. You'll live longer if you worry less.

You will worry less if you analyze a problem so you can do something about it. The first step is to get the facts. Next, analyze the facts. Finally, come to a decision and act on it. When you have the facts, you are able to do something about the problem intelligently. Without the facts, you will 'stew around in confusion.' By contrast, if you obtain the facts in 'an impartial, objective way,' your worries usually 'evaporate in the light of knowledge.'

One way to get the facts impartially is to imagine you are collecting the information for someone else. Then, you can be less emotional about the task. Try to collect facts on both sides of a problem, much as a lawyer might gather facts to assess a case's strengths and weaknesses. It also helps to write down exactly what you are worrying about and what you know you already can do about it. Then, decide what to do and begin.

Delete worries out of your mind by getting busy with something else. The human mind cannot think of more than one thing at a time. Thus, you cannot be enthusiastic about doing something you like and 'dragged down by worry' at the same time. Thinking about what you enjoy doing will crowd out your worries.

Don't concern yourself with minor things. You can end up worrying needlessly about small matters. These 'small blows' to your self-esteem and 'little jolts' to your vanity are unimportant. If you want peace of mind, don't concern yourself with trifles. Ignore them as in the well-known legal maxim: 'De minimis non curat lex' (The law does not concern itself with trifles). Change your focus so you are concerned with more important matters. Remember: 'Life is too short to be little.'

Recognize that, based on the law of averages, your worries have little justification. Considering the law of averages will help you stop worrying, because you will recognize that the vast majority of the things you worry about never happen. 'Nearly all of our worries and

unhappiness come from our imagination and not from reality.' Be more realistic about the subject of your concerns. Ask yourself what are the real chances, according to the law of averages, that this concern will really happen? If it is unlikely to happen, you don't have to worry about it.

Put a stop-loss order on your worries. You can apply this stock market principle to reducing your worries. For example, if you are planning to meet someone and that person is late, don't wait and worry. Rather, tell that person in advance that you plan to wait a certain length of time and leave. By placing a stop-loss order, you determine in advance how much time or energy you will commit to something. After that point, don't spend any more time or energy.

Don't try to saw sawdust. This is the principle of putting past mistakes behind you and moving on. Calmly analyze your past mistakes, so you can learn from them. But then don't dwell on them or regret what cannot be. This is the same principle as, 'Don't cry over spilt milk.' If you worry about things that are over and done with, you are 'trying to saw sawdust,' and that's a waste of time.

It may be difficult to change your feelings and emotions by just making up your mind that you want to do it. However, you can do it by changing your actions. Those actions will affect how you feel. For example, if you act out the 'symptoms of being radiantly happy,' you will become happy. It is physically impossible to remain unhappy and depressed while you are acting in a contrary happy way. In other words, 'think and act cheerfully, and you will feel cheerful.'

Don't try to get even or get revenge if you feel someone has wronged you. Hating your enemies them power. Instead, cross them off your list or ignore them. As General Eisenhower once said: 'Let's never waste a minute thinking about people we don't like.'

Don't expect people to be grateful because people often forget to show gratitude. it is better to be surprised when people are grateful than to expect it. instead, just give for the joy of giving.

Count your blessings - not your troubles, which means focusing on what is good and right about your life, rather than the things that are wrong. You will find that about ninety percent of your life is working well, so focus on that ninety percent and ignore the ten percent that is having problems.

Concentrate on being who you are rather than trying to be like someone else. Everyone is unique, so no matter what happens, always be yourself. Don't try to imitate others. Find and be yourself.

Use prayer, regardless of your religious background. Prayer will help inspire you and will give you a sense of sharing your burdens and not being alone, it will also help to energize you into taking action to resolve your problems.

If you have a lemon, make lemonade, in other words, ponder the lessons you can learn from misfortune. Carnegie tells an example of a farmer's land that was infested with rattlesnakes. He found that by canning rattlesnake meat, he could sell a unique product. He made a fortune from his rattlesnakes. Think about how you can turn problems into opportunities. Many individuals who started life with great handicaps were spurred on to great achievements as they overcame their handicaps.