Worry Decision Tree
British English
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Description
Worry is a cognitive process which sometimes has benefits – but too much of a good thing can result in enjoyment-sapping anxiety. Worry is a pernicious process which can easily get out-of-hand and take on a life of its own – we can even end up worrying about worrying. One helpful rule when learning to manage worry is that worry which leads to action is useful but all other forms of worry are unhelpful. The Worry Decision Tree is adapted from a tool developed by Butler & Hope (1995). It is designed to help clients identify whether a worry can be acted on (and, if so, to act on it), or else to shift their focus of attention to something more adaptive.

Instructions
Clients should be trained to manage their worries by following the flow diagram on the worksheet.
- The initial step is to notice that worry is occurring.
- The next step is to identify whether this is a worry about which something can be done / action can be taken, or whether it is not possible to act.
- If action is not possible the worry is to be set aside and attention focused elsewhere.
- If action is possible it must be determined whether this can happen immediately (in which case it is to be actioned immediately), or whether it can happen at some time in the future in which case specific plans are made before the worry is set aside and attention focused elsewhere.

References
What am I worrying about?

Is this a problem I can do something about?

Yes

Work out what you could do
List your options

No

Let the worry go
Change your focus of attention

Is there anything I can do right now?

Yes

Do it now

No

Let the worry go
Change your focus of attention

Try to distinguish between:
• ‘real’ worries – ones you can do something about
• ‘hypothetical’ worries – ones that can’t be acted on

Make a decision to let the worry go at this moment

Change your focus of attention by:
• Distracting yourself with something more interesting
• Using mindful awareness to pay attention to your surroundings

Be specific:
make a plan and write it down
What am I worrying about?

Is this a problem I can do something about?

Yes

Work out what you could do
List your options

Is there anything I can do right now?

Yes

Do it now

No

Let the worry go
Change your focus of attention

No

Plan what you could do and when you will do it

Let the worry go
Change your focus of attention