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## CRUCIAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WORRY AND ANXIETY

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*People often use the terms worry and anxiety interchangeably, but they are very different psychological states. Although both are associated with a general sense of concern and disquiet, how we experience them is quite distinct—as are the implications they have for our emotional and psychological health.*

### 01

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**We tend to experience worry in our heads and anxiety in our bodies.**

*Worry tends to be more focused on thoughts in our heads, while anxiety is more visceral in that we feel it throughout our bodies.*

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### 02

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**Worry tends to be specific while anxiety is more diffuse.**

*We worry about getting to the airport on time (specific threat) but we feel anxious about traveling—a vaguer, more general concern.*

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### 03

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**Worry is verbally focused while anxiety includes verbal thoughts and mental imagery.**

*This difference is important, as emotional mental images such as those associated with anxiety provoke a much greater cardiovascular response than emotional verbal thoughts (such as those associated with worry). This is another reason why we experience anxiety throughout the body.*

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### 04

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**Worry often triggers problem solving but anxiety does not.**

*Worry can lead us to think about solutions and strategies for dealing with a given situation. Anxiety is more like a hamster wheel that spins us around but doesn't lead us to productive solutions. Indeed, anxiety's diffuse nature makes it less amenable to problem solving.*

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### 05

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**Worry creates mild emotional distress; anxiety can create severe emotional distress.**

*Anxiety is simply a much more powerful and hence, disruptive and problematic psychological state than worry.*

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## Crucial Differences Between Worry and Anxiety

### 06

**Worry is caused by more realistic concerns than anxiety.**

*If you're concerned about getting fired because you did really poorly on a project, you're worried. If you're concerned about getting fired because your boss didn't ask about your child's piano recital, you're anxious.*

### 07

**Worry tends to be controllable, anxiety much less so.**

*By problem solving and thinking through strategies to deal with the cause of our worry, we can diminish it greatly. We have much less control over our anxiety, as it is much harder to "talk ourselves out of it."*

### 08

**Worry tends to be a temporary state but anxiety can linger.**

*Once we resolve the issue worrying us, our worry diminishes and disappears. Anxiety can linger for long periods of time and even jump from one focus to another (e.g., one week we feel anxious about work, then about our health, then about our kids...).*

### 09

**Worry doesn't impact our professional and personal functioning; anxiety does.**

*No one takes a sick day to sit and worry about whether their teenager will do well on their exams. But anxiety can make us feel so restless, uncomfortable, and incapable of concentrating that we might literally feel too distressed to work.*

### 10

**Worry creates mild emotional distress; anxiety can create severe emotional distress.**

*Anxiety is simply a much more powerful and hence, disruptive and problematic psychological state than worry.*

(Dr. Guy Winch, Ph.D. Mar 14, 2016)

# ANXIETY

