



## 5 Steps to Help Control Worry

by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D.  
“Don’t Worry Instead Connect”

Step 1 is the most powerful method of controlling worry ever devised.

### Step 1: Never Worry Alone

My former teacher, Dr. Thomas Gutheil, taught this maxim. It sums up, in three simple words, the most important principle of all in combating worry: make human contact. Get out of your imagination and into a live dialog. If you are alone, call someone or walk to someone else’s office. You don’t even have to talk about what is bothering you. Indeed, it is often better not to. Just make contact with another person. Talk about the weather, or a baseball game or your favorite restaurant.

### Step 2: Get the Facts

Toxic worry is usually based on lack of information or incorrect information. If you are worried about what a friend thinks of you, ask. If you are concerned you might have a melanoma, see a doctor. If you are worried you might get downsized, find out from your supervisor what’s going on. Getting the facts is better than stewing.

### Step 3: Make A Plan

Based on what you learn in Steps 1 and 2, now is the time to take action. Taking action puts you in a position of control, which always helps. Even if your plan fails, you will have reduced your toxic worry simply by taking action. And if the first plan fails, think up another; and another. Passivity is the great danger. Toxic worry feasts on a passive victim.

### Step 4: Practice Mind Maintenance

This includes the following five steps: A. Get enough sleep. B. Eat a balanced diet and don’t use food as a form of self-medication. C. Exercise regularly. D. Pray or meditate regularly and E. Get daily doses of positive human contact.



### Step 5: Let It Go

This is the hardest step, the step that requires the most practice. But it is a talent that can be learned. Once you have gone through Steps 1 – 4, you should be ready to move to Step 5 and let your worry go. Don’t hold onto it as if it were protecting you. In fact, toxic worry is really bad for your health. So, Let it go!

