Worry postponement diary

Try returning attention to your day without forcing worries away. Do not delay urgent action or necessary care.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

Review time and brief duration

e.g. 6 pm, up to ten minutes; stop if it becomes unhelpful.

Activity to return to after the review

e.g. Prepare dinner.

Brief worry note	Activity I returned to	At review: action or uncertainty?
e.g. What if the interview goes badly?	e.g. Returned to my planned walk.	e.g. I can prepare two questions; the result remains uncertain.

What helped me re-engage?

e.g. A brief note helped me return to the walk.

What to change / whether to stop

e.g. Discuss it if the review becomes more repetitive worry.

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Using this resource

Worry postponement diary

What this helps with

A planned worry-review period can be a practical way to choose when to engage with recurring worries. It is an optional attentional strategy, alongside a wider CBT plan, rather than the defining intervention in the intolerance-of-uncertainty model. When a worry appears, you can note it briefly and return to your task while allowing the thought to be there. The aim is more choice about engagement, not suppressing thoughts or achieving a perfectly quiet mind.

How to use it

1. Choose a brief review period, around 10-15 minutes, at a time that does not disrupt sleep.
2. When hypothetical worry appears, note a few words and gently return attention to what you were doing.
3. At review time, look only at worries still relevant. Use practical problem solving where action is possible.
4. End at the agreed time and return to an activity. Review whether the approach helps; adapt or stop if it leads to more repetitive thinking.

A fictional worked example

Tom notices several worries while studying. He writes "exam result" once and reminds himself that he can review it at 6 pm. The thought returns; he does not argue with it or repeatedly add it to the list. He gently returns to the paragraph in front of him. At 6 pm the exam result is still uncertain, but a separate worry about revision has a practical next step. He plans one topic for tomorrow and ends the review. His mind is not completely calm, but he has spent more of the afternoon studying instead of wrestling with every prediction.

Keep in mind

Do not defer urgent action, medical needs or genuine threats. Avoid repeatedly recording the same worry or using review time for extended worst-case rehearsal. If this approach worsens worry, sleep or distress, stop and discuss alternatives. It is not required for everyone with GAD.

Sources and attribution

NHS Every Mind Matters. Tackling your worries. Accessed 24 October 2026.

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