How to stop worrying. Accept uncertainty

The inability to tolerate uncertainty plays a huge role in anxiety and worry. Chronic worriers can not stand doubt or unpredictability. They need to know with 100 percent certainty what is going to happen. Worrying is seen as a way to predict what the future has in store—a way to prevent unpleasant surprises and control the outcome. The problem is, it does not work.

Thinking about all the things that could go wrong does not make life any more predictable. You may feel safer when you are worrying, but it is just an illusion. Focusing on worst-case scenarios will not keep bad things from happening. It will only keep you from enjoying the good things you have in the present. So if you want to stop worrying, start by tackling your need for certainty and immediate answers.

Challenging intolerance of uncertainty: The key to anxiety relief

Ask yourself the following questions and write down your responses. See if you can come to an understanding of the disadvantages and problems of being intolerant of uncertainty.

- Is it possible to be certain about everything in life?
- What are the advantages of requiring certainty, versus the disadvantages? Or, how is needing certainty in life helpful and unhelpful?
- Do you tend to predict bad things will happen just because they are uncertain? Is this a reasonable thing to do? What is the likelihood of positive or neutral outcomes?
- Is it possible to live with the small chance that something negative may happen, given its likelihood is very low?