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Are You Worried to Death?

Are you constantly worrying about everything? Many legal nurse consultants worry about relationships, finances, parents, children, and their jobs or businesses.

In Legal Nurse Podcast 360, Seth Greenwald shared his thoughts about the themes of anxiety, stress and mindset and how to control those gremlins. I'm Pat Iyer and this is *Iyer's Insights*, one of the twice weekly Legal Nurse Podcast shows.

Your negative thoughts can take control of your mind and drive you crazy, prevent you from sleeping well, and disrupt your concentration. So, in this show, I'm going to share some strategies that will help you get those positive thoughts back in your brain too.

- You worry if the attorney will be happy with the report you prepared.
- You worry that you won't get in enough cases.
- You can worry you will get too many cases and won't be able to handle them all.
- You worry your subcontractor will miss the key points and the attorney will be angry.
- You worry the attorney will balk at the large invoice.

Do I have to go on? You get the point.

Worry is that sense of fear that can overcome you in relation to your work or an illness or other situations. A few individuals even suffer from panic attacks where their level of worry is so high that it's debilitating. I remember one such event in my life when I developed an intense worry about one of my sons. I paced around the house, feeling like my heart was going to jump out of my chest. I felt helpless and out of control. That was the day I realized what people meant by anxiety attacks.

We worry about the future believing that we are totally helpless about how to influence what will happen next in our lives. I have come to trust that we're not helpless. As entrepreneurs, we know we can be in charge and we can change our circumstances as we need to. Yet, we still worry.

In most cases, we worry about matters that have not happened or something that we imagine will occur. One of my wise friends said that when we worry, we pay interest on a debt we may not even have. You've heard the expression, "Sick with worry" or "worried to death". You may be all keyed up with nothing to fight and no way to turn off the tension chemicals. You become a time bomb who is not allowed to explode-consequently, you may implode. If this happens often, it can have a dangerous effect on your health.

Body Effects of Worrying

Let's revisit our pathophysiology concepts. Every system in your body is affected by worry. Besides raising blood pressure and increasing blood clotting, worry can prompt your liver to produce more cholesterol, all of which can raise your risk of heart attack and stroke.

Muscle stress can produce headaches, back pain, and other body aches. Are you like me and get tight shoulder muscles from tension? Worry can also trigger an increase in stomach acid and either slow or speed up muscle contractions in your intestines, which can lead to stomach aches, constipation, diarrhea, gas or heartburn.

Worry can affect your skin as well. It can affect your respiratory system and aggravate asthma. Growing evidence even proposes that chronic worry can compromise your immune system, making you more vulnerable to bacteria, viruses, and perhaps even cancer.

There's one thing that worrying does not do. It does not make the situation better. Therefore, we must find an alternative to worrying so we have less worry and stress in our lives.

Most of us, when we worry, are not even aware that it has begun. That is the nature of habits. That is why learning to become aware of your worrying is fundamental to any technique of worry reduction.

Start out by noticing you are worrying: Become more aware of it; observe it with the goal in mind of catching the worry *as soon* as it starts.

In enforcing any of these worry-reduction methods, the earlier you apply them, the more effective in the long run the technique will be. This is because the longer an episode of worrying lasts, the more the habit is reinforced and the more you are

strengthening the bonds between the worrisome ideas. Put differently, you are reinforcing the habit. Therefore, the earlier you catch worrying, the *less* you strengthen the habit.

Count Your Worrying

In learning to keep an eye on your worrying, it is useful to keep track of how often it happens during the day.

- Pull out that cell phone that is never farther than 1 foot away from you. Open a note and record when you are worried.
- At the end of each day write down the total and watch this trend over several days.

This routine is helpful as a reminder to you to observe and catch worrying. It also offers information on how much time you spend worrying. Then as you begin applying worry-reduction strategies and continue to track the day-to-day frequency of worrying, you will be able to see what impact your strategies are having.

Counting your worry episodes also can have a subtle effect of reducing them.

Use Relaxation Methods for Bodily Disturbance

Especially when you are having trouble going to sleep, use these techniques. I can tell you from personal experience that they work better than a glass of wine or Ambien.

1. Practice a relaxing image. Picture a scene that creates a sense of calm and peacefulness, for example lying on a warm beach, sitting next to a brook in a beautiful valley, or reclining in your favorite chair at home. *Let go* of all other thoughts and immerse yourself in this picture as if you were actually there.
2. Focus your attention on your breathing, every time you inhale and exhale. Say the word, "relax" or "calm" or any other word that is significant to you, upon each exhalation.
3. Deliberately tense up different groups of muscles for about five seconds, then release that tension all at once and concentrate for a minute on the feelings of

relaxation that enter those muscles once they are released. I usually start at my toes and work upward.

4. Breathe with your stomach, rather than your chest, and with practice learn to breathe at a rate of around eight to ten cycles per minute.

With each of these techniques, you will notice thoughts intruding. Just let those thoughts pass through your mind and gently focus your attention back to the relaxation process. With practice, your ability to let go of thinking is likely to increase, making it easier to let go of worrisome thoughts during the day.

You can practice such methods for ten to 15 minutes twice a day, just to build up your ability to elicit a relaxation response briefly, whenever you catch yourself beginning to worry or notice bodily tension or upset.

Have fun

Legal nurse consulting is a serious business. We get involved when people are hurt. One of the best things that seems to help when we are overcome with worry and stress is that we are finding creative ways to entertain ourselves. I'll conclude this show with suggestions for how to bring more joy into your life.

1. **Listen to music while you work.** Having pleasant, relaxing music in the background makes me more productive.
2. **Use your cell phone to take photographs.** Head out to anywhere with your camera and challenge yourself to have a great time noticing the details through the lens of your device.
3. **Read something that interests you.** There is probably something that you could sit down and read for hours. Make it a point to turn off all the other distractions and immerse yourself. I read for at least an hour and usually 2 every night before going to sleep.
4. **Draw / color/ paint.** Remember when you were younger, and you could spend hours making art? Unless you are an artist now, you may have stopped having that kind of fun. Start up again! You do not have to be “good at art” to have a good time being creative. Buy an adult coloring book and go at it.

5. Check your local newspapers and blogs for announcements about activities. You will find that there is a lot to do and a lot to learn.

6. Host a comedy or talent night at your house. Gather the bravest group of friends that you have got and invite them over to come perform stand-up comedy for each other at your place. If you are not the comedy kind, you can do karaoke or some other form of performance art with your friends and family members. It is a guaranteed good time if you have laidback friends who can laugh at themselves. Ask friends who play an instrument to come over for a jam session.

7. Spend time making a wish list. One of the best things that you can do to have fun with yourself is to daydream. Sit down and spend some time making a wish list of all the things that you would like to have or do in your life. Make a list of goals – places to travel someday, achievements you would like to make, things you want to change about yourself. Or make a list of silly stuff like what you would do with a billion dollars or whom you wish you could have met in a past life. You may find that this inspires you to do more with your life. Or you may just find it fun to daydream for a while all by yourself.

8. People watch. Go sit somewhere where there are many people and just watch them. People are fascinating. You will overhear things and witness things that will totally surprise you. This is particularly fun in large cities. For example, New York City is one of the most entertaining places on earth. I've also found my trips to India to see my family to be memorable. I've seen women sitting in the sun making gravel by hitting stones with hammers. I've seen live chickens tied to handlebars of a bike. I've seen people balancing enormous loads on their heads. Every trip there makes me appreciate the things I take for granted.

9. Go hiking. Get your blood pumping by finding a spot near you where you can hike or just go for regular walks. There is a lot to see when you get out of your car. The physical exercise is good for you, but it is also the chance to really enjoy your surroundings for a change that makes walking fun.

10. Dance at community dance events. Dance with friends. Dance in the privacy of your own home. You do not have to have rhythm or special shoes to be able to shake your body and feel good. Loosen up and have fun with it!

11. Make up stories. It is fun to stretch our imaginations by creating stories in our minds. Write your own or get one or more people together regularly to tell stories

aloud to each other. Tell your own stories or work on stories together. Do not worry about getting the words exactly right. Instead, get the ideas flowing and enjoy watching your own mind expand with new thoughts.

You'll find these activities are fun and will help you get worry under control.

Before I end this show, I have an announcement. You may have heard me speak about the 5 pillars of legal nurse consulting. I believe these are essential for success. The 5 pillars are expertise, marketing, client relationships, business development, and finance.

I've studied the reports I receive from the company that hosts this podcast and identified the most downloaded shows. I selected the top 4 shows in each of the 5 pillars. To round it out, I added a 6th category: stories of successful legal nurse consultants.

In addition to being able to get the bundle of shows, you'll also be able to download a Mini Workbook so you can take notes, record your insights, and focus on the key points.

Very soon you'll be able to get access to these top shows on my website: podcast.legalnursebusiness.com. They aren't there yet – listen to this show for an announcement.

Do you have lots of questions about being a legal nurse consultant? Are you wondering how to get clients, grow and manage a business, and dig into medical records? Do you feel a bit lost?

I've got a phenomenal resource for you just waiting on LegalNurseBusiness.com. My online training and books are designed to help you discover ways to strengthen your skills and businesses. Check them out at legalnursebusiness.com.

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