

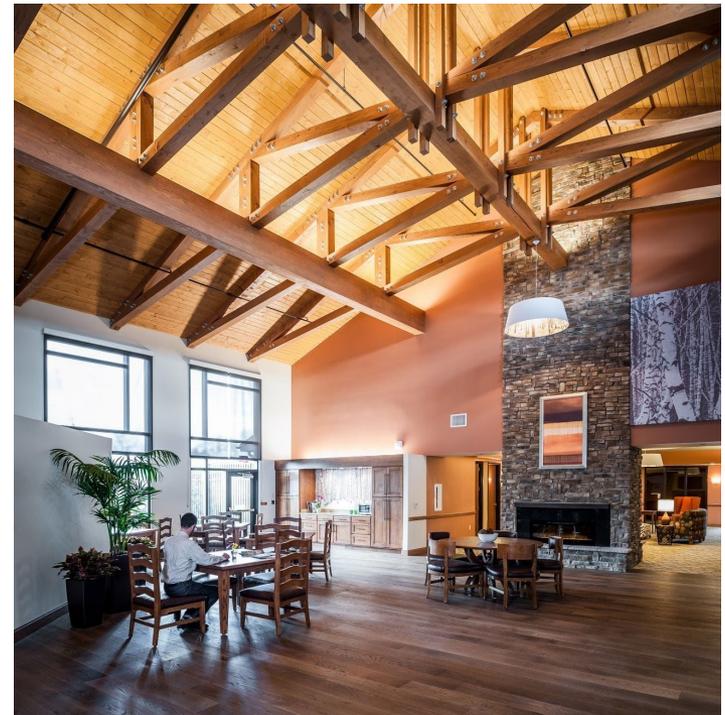
How to Manage Anxiety and Worry in These Uncertain Times

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Author Introduction

- Education
- Family Life
 - Originally from Cincinnati
 - Live in Cincinnati with my husband
- Work at the Lindner Center



Why I am Interested in this Topic

- Patients
- I am a worrier



Outline

- Learn to identify worry and how it is different from anxiety
- Learn how worry keeps us anxious
- Learn how to combat worry and engage in the present moment
- Discuss how to apply these strategies to common, pandemic-related uncertainties

Example

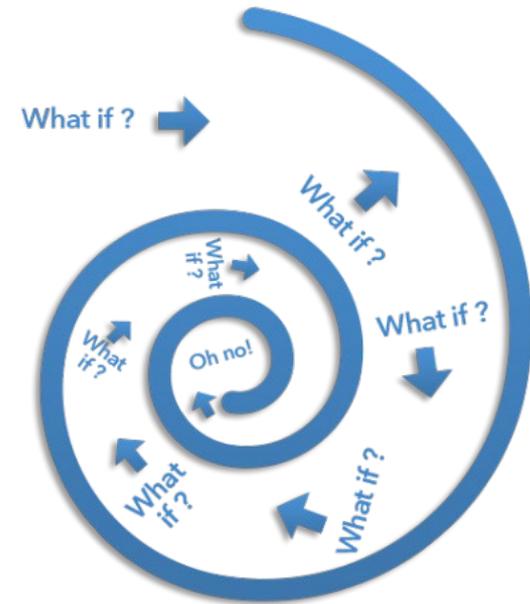
Janet just received an email from her boss. The email reads *“Please see me at the end of the day to discuss an important matter”*.



What is worry, and how
is it different than
anxiety?

Worry

- Mentally anticipating and preparing for the future
- Analyzing past situations
- Always negative
- Starts with “What if?” questions
- A **response** to anxiety



Anxiety

- In the body
- Evolution
 - Fight
 - Flight
 - Freeze
- Worry is like avoidance and overpreparation, we engage in worry to decrease anxiety

Common Pandemic-related Uncertainties

- What if someone at this party is sick? How do I know?
- What if I lose my job?
- Will someone be upset with me if I don't go to this event?
- Are my kids learning what they need to learn? Will they be in person or virtual?
- What if I can't juggle work and kids at home?
- Will this ever end?
- Is the government exerting too much/too little control? What are the implications?
- Others?

Common Myths About Worry

1. If I did not worry, I would be careless and irresponsible
2. If I worry, I will be less disturbed when unforeseen events occur.
3. I worry in order to know what to do
4. If I worry in advance, I will be less disappointed if something serious occurs
5. The fact that I worry helps me plan my actions to solve a problem
6. The act of worrying itself can prevent mishaps from occurring
7. If I did not worry, it would make me a negligent person
8. It is by worrying that I finally undertake the work that I must do
9. I worry because I think it can help me find a solution to my problem
10. The fact that I worry shows that I am a person who takes care of their affairs
11. Thinking too much about positive things can prevent them from occurring
12. The fact that I worry confirms that I am a prudent person
13. If misfortune comes, I will feel less responsible if I have been worrying about it beforehand
14. By worrying, I can find a better way to do things

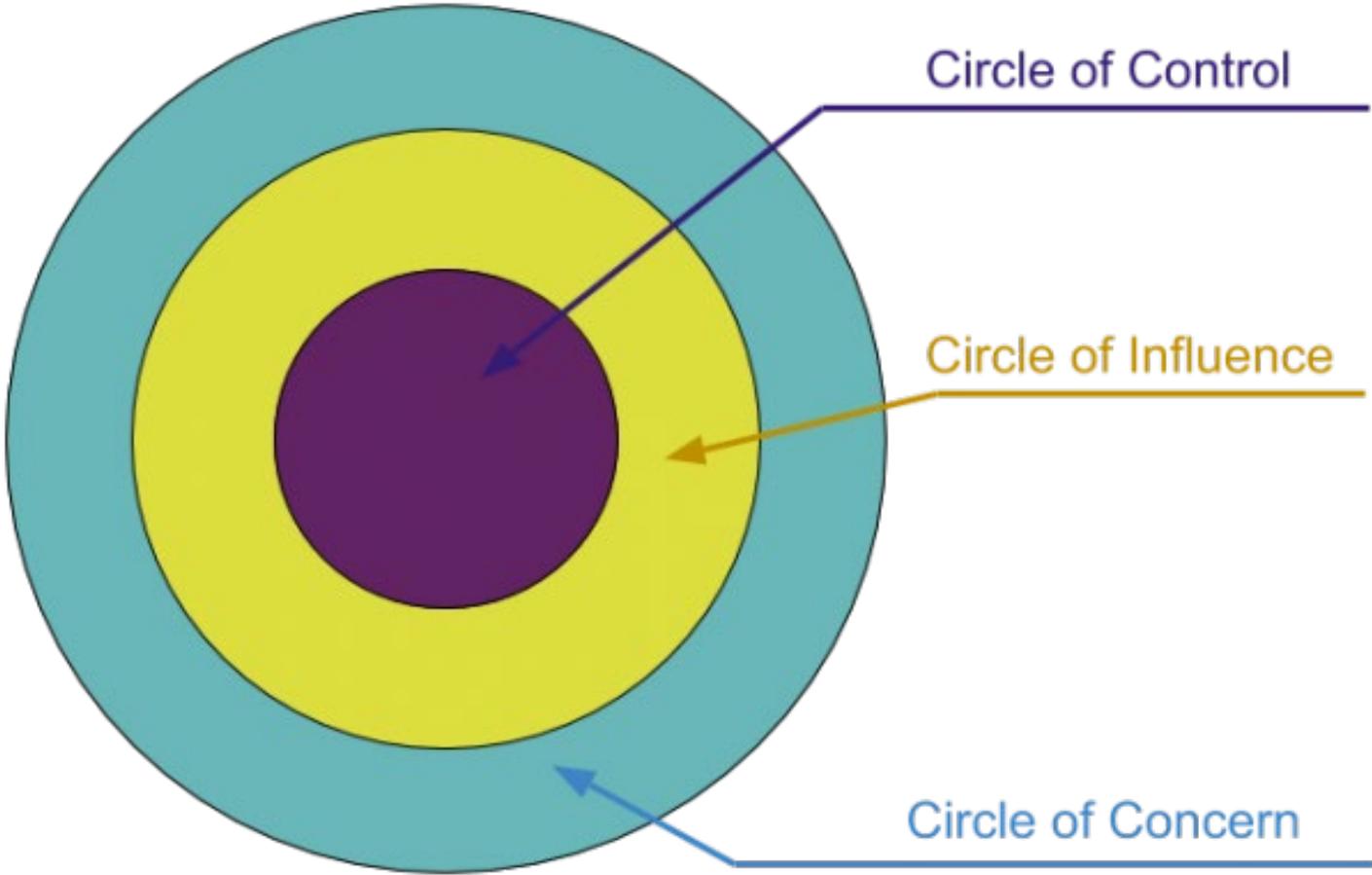
Questions from the WW-II (Herbert et al., 2014)

Myths

- “Worry is a positive personality trait”
- “Worry helps me problem solve”
- “Worry helps motivate me”
- “Worry protects me from negative emotions”
- “Worry can prevent negative outcomes”

The Problem:

- What if there is no answer?
.....the answer is uncertain?
....we do not have control over the problem?
- Usually worry is mindless



When is it excessive?

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- Excessive worry and anxiety about a variety of topics
- At least 6 months
- Difficult to control
- Accompanied by at least three of the following physical or cognitive symptoms (1 for kids):
 - Edginess or restlessness
 - Fatigue
 - Impaired concentration
 - Irritability
 - Increased muscle tension, soreness
 - Difficulty sleeping

The Cycle of Worry and Anxiety

The avoidance cycle

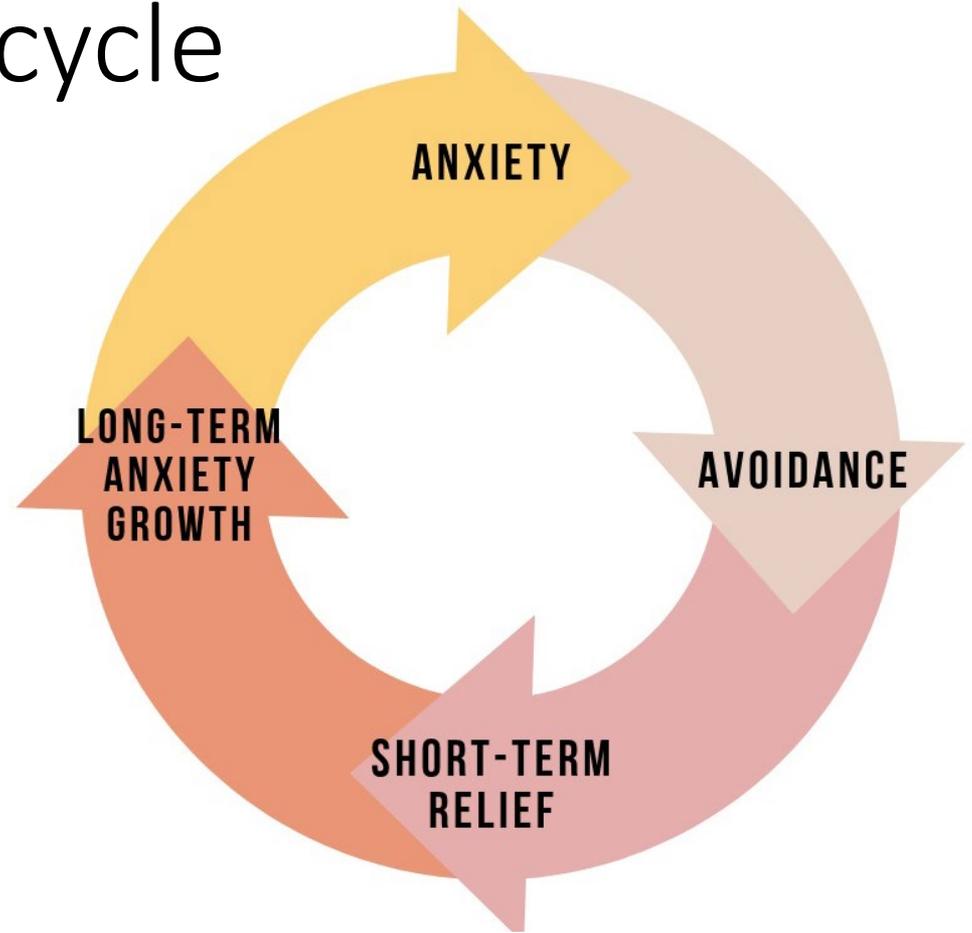
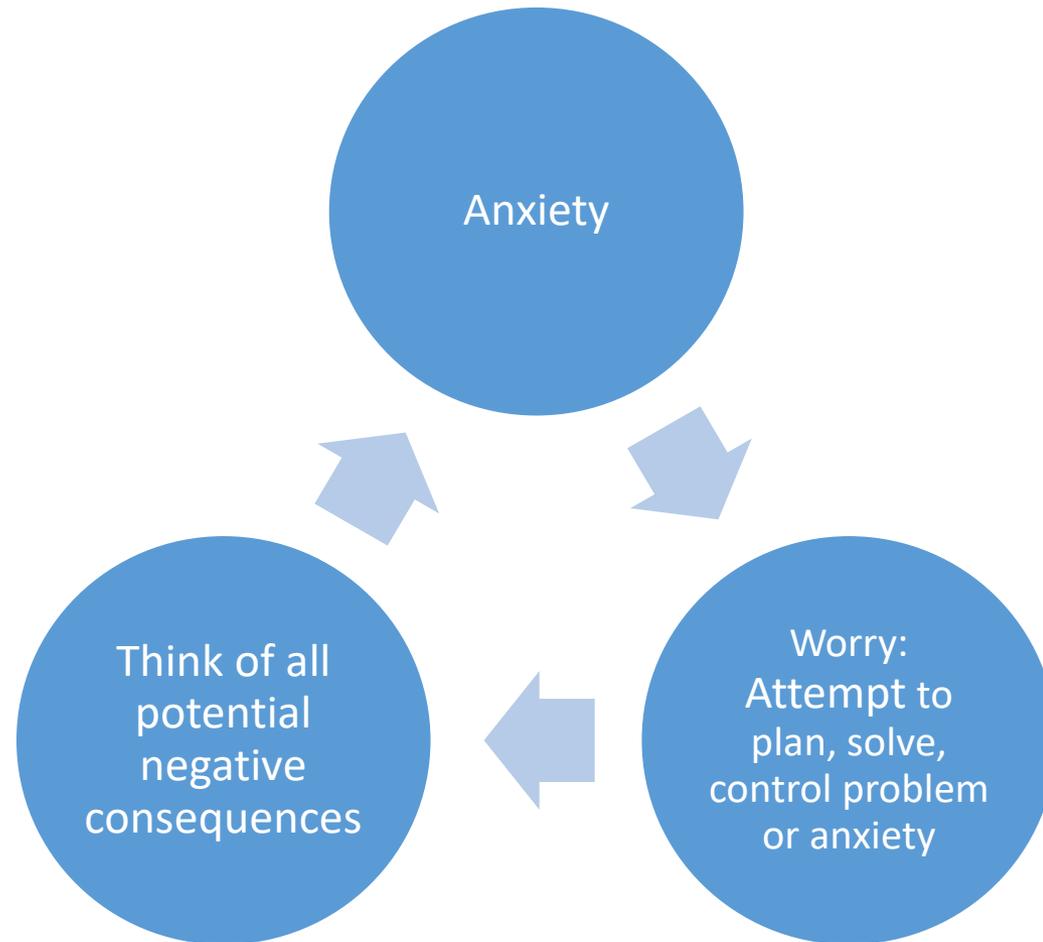


Image from: www.thecounselingcollectivefw.com

The content of worry increases anxiety



Example

Jennifer is afraid that she may not have enough servers hired. After her restaurant shut down in 2020, she has had trouble rebuilding the staff.



How to Manage Worry

Mindfulness

- Non-judgmental awareness of the present moment
- Labeling thoughts as just thoughts
- Regular practice
- Leaves on a stream



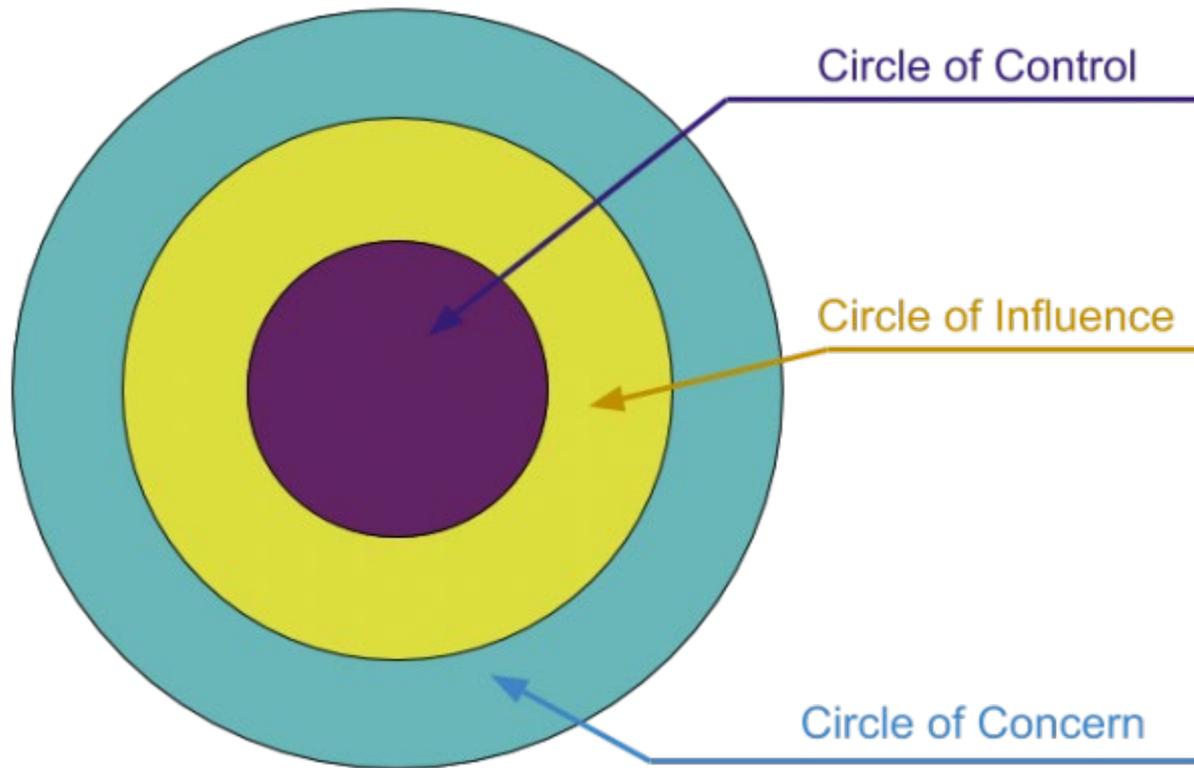
How Mindfulness Impacts the Anxiety Cycle



Acceptance

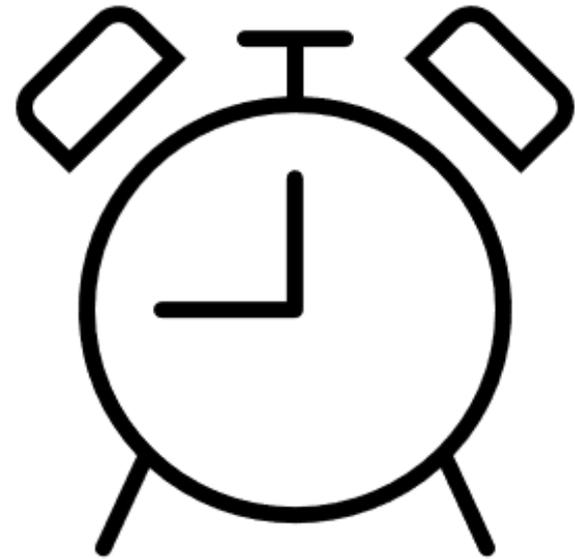
- Accept that uncertainty is part of life
- Accept the need for change if required
- Accept lack of control in some things
- Using religion and faith as a comfort





If you can't eliminate it, contain it

- Worry period
- Make it mindful!



How to Apply It

- What if someone at this party is sick? What if I get sick?
- What if my kids aren't learning what they need to learn? Will they be in person or virtual?
- Will this ever end?

Summary

- Worry is common, especially since the pandemic
- It is a response to anxiety
- It can reinforce anxiety or make it worse
- We often worry about things that are uncertain or that we cannot control
- Mindfulness and acceptance are helpful tools to combat worry

Mindfulness Resources

- Books
 - *Wherever You Go, There You Are* by Jon Kabat-Zinn
 - *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life* by Steven Hayes
- Applications
 - Headspace
 - Insight timer
 - Ten Percent Happier
 - Select guided meditations on YouTube

Questions/Comments?