

Summary of *How to Stop Worrying & Start Living* by Dale Carnegie

Worry is a complete waste of time.

Worry doesn't solve problems. Rational thought and decisive action do; worry simply clouds our thinking and drains our energy.

Erma Bombeck once said, "**Worry is like a rocking chair: it gives you something to do but never gets you anywhere.**"

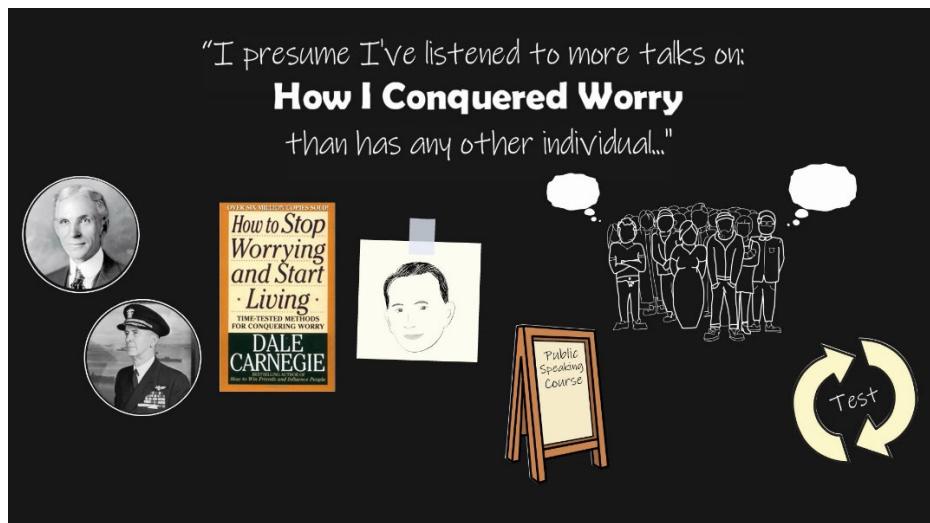


Nearly a century ago, Dale Carnegie taught public speaking courses in New York City and saw his students struggle with unproductive worry.

After learning a series of anti-worry techniques from people like Henry Ford and WWII Navy Admiral Ernest King, he used his public speaking courses as a laboratory to test the anti-worry techniques.

For five years, Carnegie's students tested a select few of his worry remedies and reported back to his class.

Carnegie says, "**I presume I've listened to more talks on 'How I conquered worry' than has any other individual who has walked this earth.**"



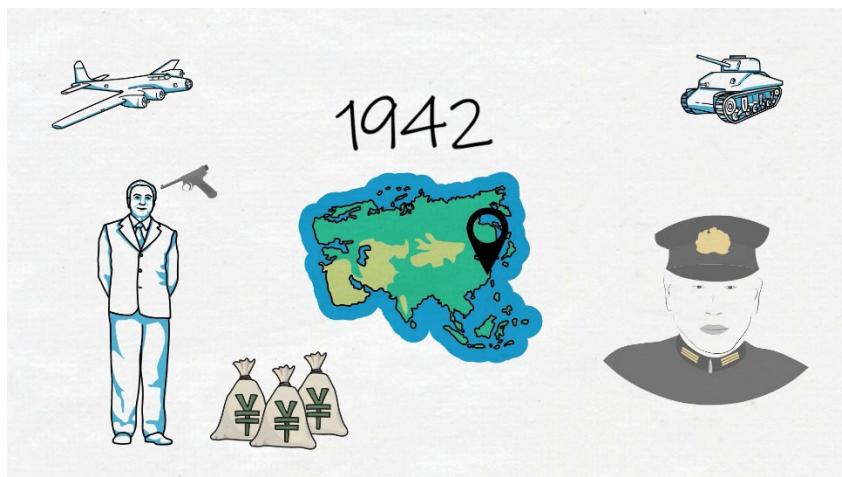
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There are many methods to stop worrying and start living more productively, but there are three worry remedies that Carnegie found to be particularly effective.

The first worry remedy will eliminate 90% of your worry. The second worry remedy will eliminate the remaining 10%, and the third worry remedy will prevent worry from creeping back into your life.

Worry Remedy #1: Analyze Your Worry

In 1942, American Galen Litchfield was managing an Asian insurance company in Shanghai when a Japanese Admiral walked into his office and demanded, at gunpoint, he liquidate the company's assets and deliver the money to the Japanese empire.



Litchfield did what he was told...sort of. He liquidated all assets except a \$750,000 block of securities that belonged to the Hong Kong branch.



Days later, the Admiral discovered what Litchfield had done. When Litchfield got word of this, he was paralyzed with fear. He'd defied the Japanese army and assumed he'd be thrown into the bridge house - a torture chamber of the Japanese Gestapo.

Then Litchfield collected himself by doing what he'd always done when worried, he went to his typewriter and wrote out two questions.

1. What am I worried about?
2. What can I do about it?

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He typed out the answer to the first question: *I am afraid I will be thrown into the bridge house tomorrow morning.*

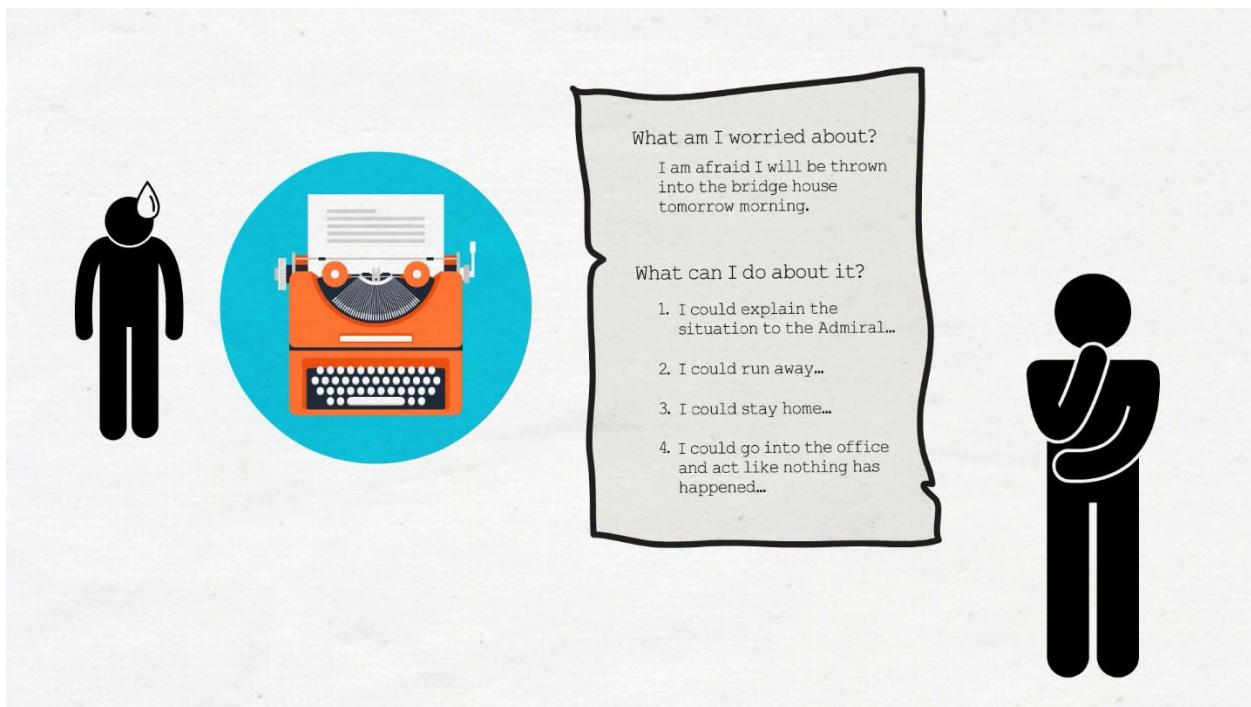
Then he spent the next few hours thinking and writing down different courses of action he could take.

Option 1: I could explain the situation to the Admiral, but since the Admiral doesn't speak English, he'd probably get frustrated talking to a translator and throw me in the bridge house.

Option 2: I could run away, but there's a good chance they'd track me down and lock me in the bridge house.

Option 3: I could stay home for a while and hope the Admiral might forget what happened. But there's a good chance the Admiral would get suspicious of my absence and track me down.

Option 4: I could go into the office and act like nothing happened and hope the Admiral has bigger things to worry about.



After Litchfield wrote his worry and various courses of action on the page, he could objectively analyze his options and more easily decide what to do next.

Litchfield says, “**Experience has proved to me... that fifty per cent of my worries vanishes once I arrive at a clear, definite decision; and another forty per cent usually vanishes once I start to carry out that decision.”**

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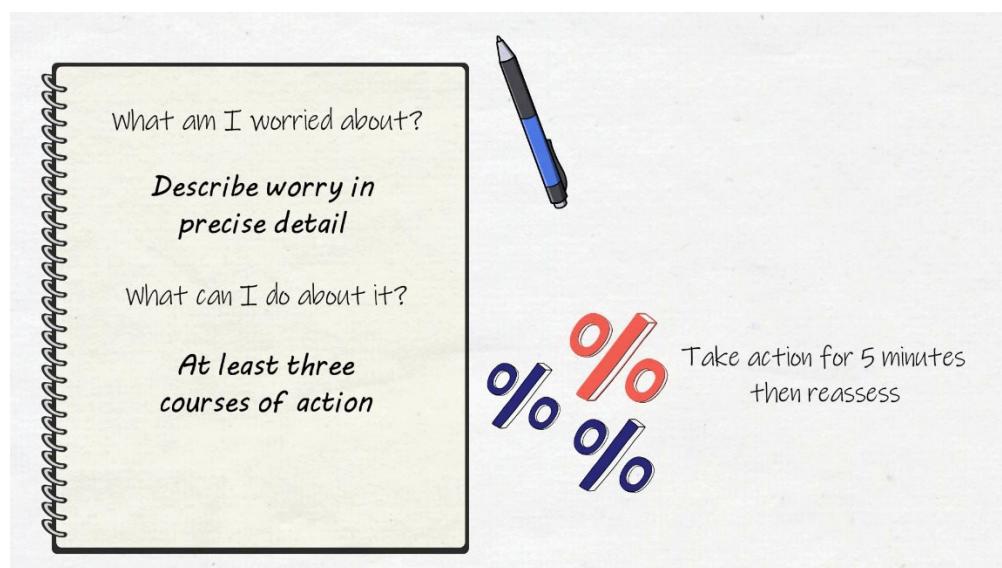
Realizing his fourth option had the highest probability of a positive outcome, he committed to that course of action.

The next morning, Litchfield entered the office and acted as though nothing had happened. The Admiral glared at him as he always had, but said nothing. Six weeks later, the Admiral went back to Tokyo and Litchfield never saw him again.

The next time you're worried, grab a pen and paper and write down two questions.

1. What am I worried about?
2. What can I do about it?

After describing your worry in precise detail, write at least three courses of action you can take. Then decide which course of action has the highest probability of a positive result.



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If your decision is difficult, proceed with any one option for five minutes and stop worrying. If, after five minutes, your decision still feels right, continue. If not, proceed with the next best option.

The more action you take, the more worry fades away.

Write, decide, and act to eliminate 90% of your worry.

Worry Remedy #2: Accept the Worst, Then Improve

Eliminate the remaining 10% of your worry by emulating Willis Carrier.

Willis carrier invented the first electric air conditioning unit and spent 20+ years leading the Carrier Corporation. But early in his career Carrier worked as an engineer installing equipment at gas plants. When one project started to go horribly wrong, Carrier was consumed with worry. He feared losing his job and damaging his reputation.

How did Carrier manage his worry?

He imagined the project had failed, his reputation had been damaged, and he had been fired. Carrier reconciled himself to live with the worst outcome. By doing so, he realized that if he worked hard, he could find a new job and rebuild his reputation.



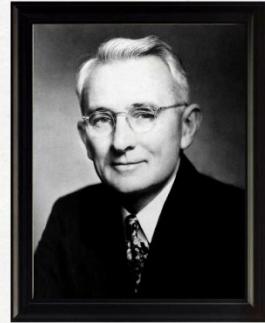
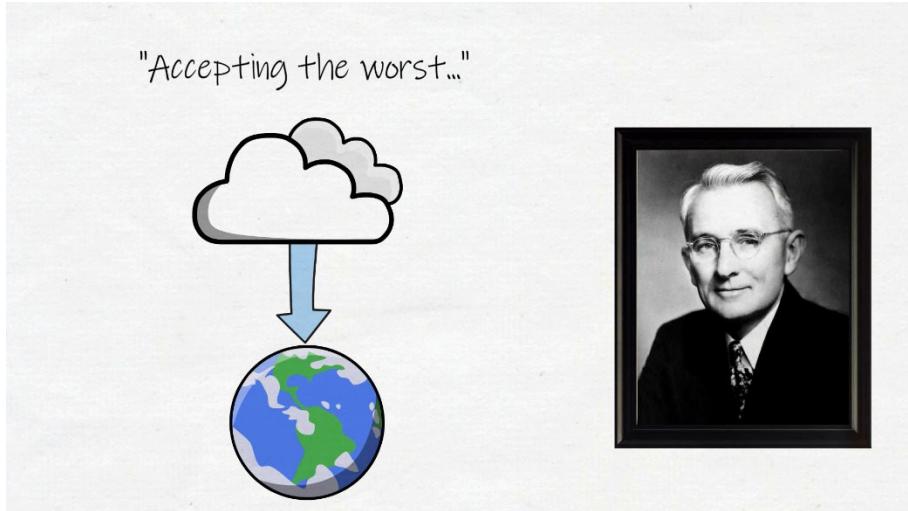
By learning to live with the worst-case scenario, his worry dissipated.

After accepting the worst, Carrier could think free of worry, which allowed him to see that adding additional equipment to the project might turn the project around. After implementing his solution, his company went from potentially losing \$20,000, to making \$15,000 (a small fortune in 1899!).

Carrier told Carnegie, “**One of the worst features about worrying is that it destroys our ability to concentrate. When we worry, our minds jump here and there and everywhere, and we lose all power of decision. However, when we force ourselves to face the worst and accept it mentally, we then eliminate all those vague imaginings and put ourselves in a position in which we are able to concentrate on our problem.**”

Carnegie says accepting the worst “**yanks us down out of the great grey clouds in which we fumble around when we are blinded by worry (and) plants our feet good and solid on the earth.**”

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Experience the power of 'accepting the worst' by creating a list of tasks you need to do today. After populating your list with 'urgent and important' tasks, simulate getting to the end of the day and nothing on your list was completed. Feel the emotion and accept the negative outcome.

Now, ask yourself, *"What can I do to improve this day?"*



After accepting the worst, anything you do will feel like a bonus. Thanks to a simple mindset shift, your list of obligations and worries became a list of opportunities.

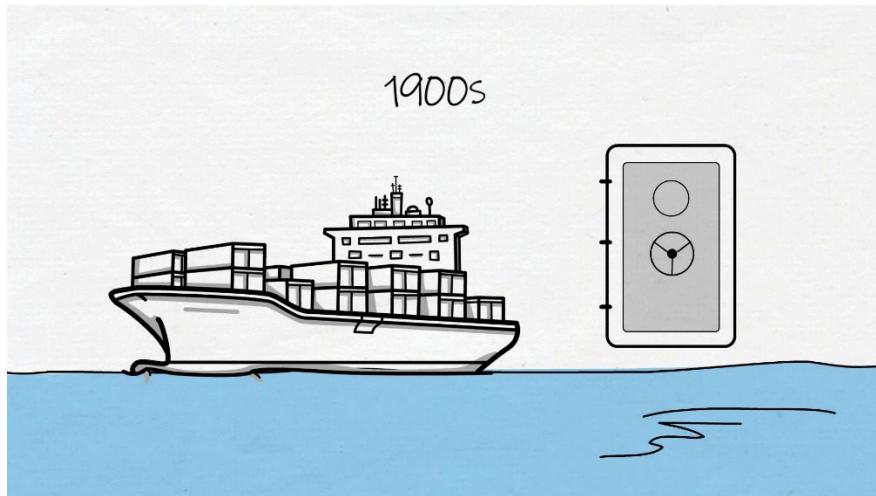
If you analyze your worry, then accept the worst-case scenario and improve upon it, you'll eliminate 100% of your worry.

However, to prevent worry from creeping back into your life, live in 'day-tight compartments.'

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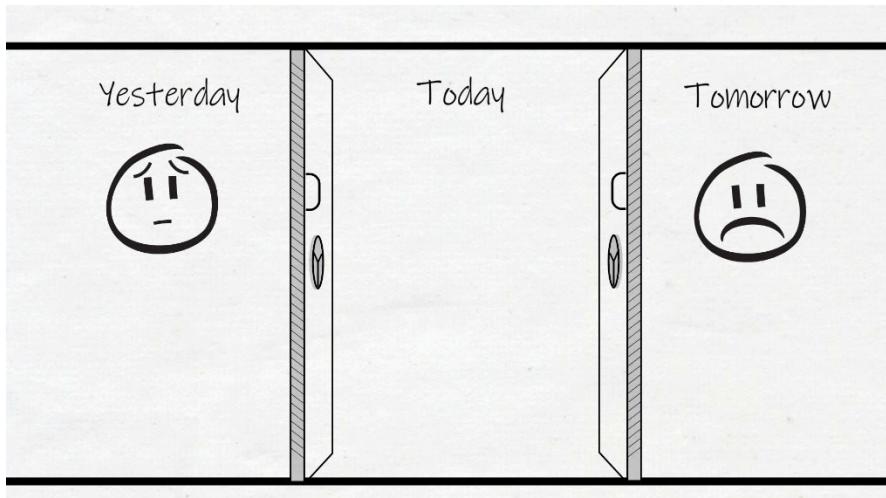
Worry Remedy #3: Compartmentalize Your Worry

In the early 1900s, large ships were designed so that if one part of the ship flooded it could be sealed off with watertight iron doors to prevent the water from seeping into other compartments and sinking the ship.



This analogy can apply to your life.

You can act like the captain of a huge ship who can press a button and shut the iron doors on today's compartment, preventing the regrets of yesterday and worries of tomorrow from flooding your mind.



To activate your iron doors, wake up each morning and imagine that today is a new life; your old self died last night (along with your regret), and today you have a clean slate.

Then, tell yourself, "*If I take care of today, tomorrow will take care of itself.*"

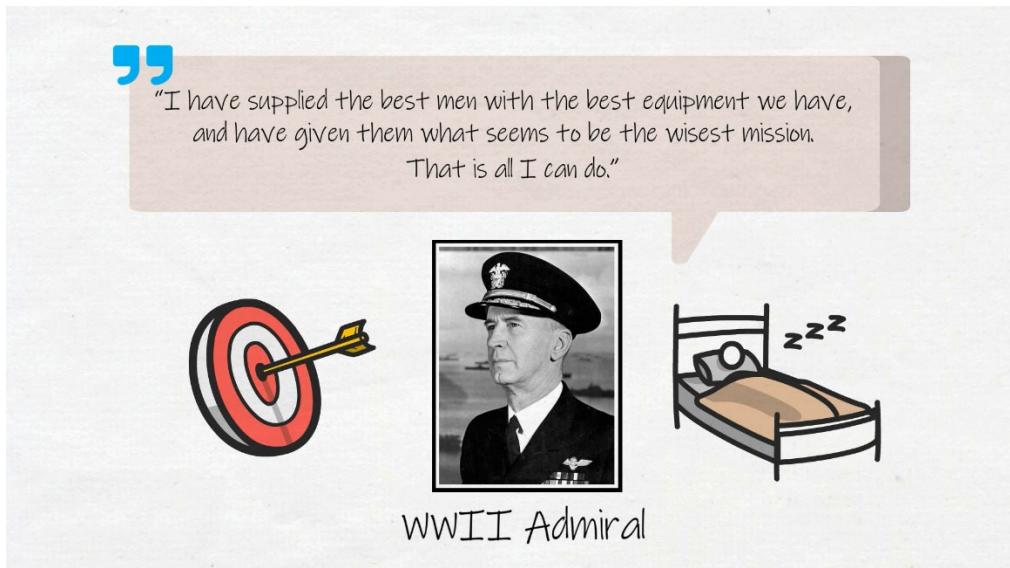
In the book, Dale Carnegie says, "**the best possible way to prepare for tomorrow is to concentrate with all your intelligence, all your enthusiasm, on doing today's work superbly today. That is the only possible way you can prepare for the future.**"

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If you do your best to take care of today's responsibilities, solve today's problems, and prepare for tomorrow, why worry about tomorrow?

During WWII, US Navy Admiral Ernest J. King famously said, "**I have supplied the best men with the best equipment we have, and have given them what seems to be the wisest mission. That is all I can do.**"

The Admiral slept soundly each night because he knew he did everything in his power that day to make tomorrow successful.



Like the Admiral, do everything you can in the hours between morning and bedtime, and let go of tomorrow.

After learning the power of living in 'day-tight compartments,' Carnegie taped the following poem to his bathroom mirror:

“Yesterday is but a dream and tomorrow is only a vision, But today well lived makes yesterday a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of hope.” - Kālidāsa

Takeaway

If you want to stop worrying and start living, start analyzing your worry: write down your worry in precise detail with at least three courses of action. Then, decide and act.

Eliminate your remaining worry by accepting the worst-case scenario has come true and then asking yourself, "How can I improve upon the worst?"

After eliminating your worry, prevent new worry from creeping into your life by living in 'day-tight compartments.' Imagine each day is a new life and tell yourself, "If I do my best to take care of today, tomorrow will take care of itself."

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How to Stop Worrying

#1: "What am I worried about?"
"What can I do about it?"

#2: "Worst-Case" "How can I improve this?"

#3: "Each day is a new life." +
"If I do my best to take care of today..."



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Key Quotes

"Nothing can bring you peace but yourself." – Dale Carnegie

"Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand." - Thomas Carlyle

"Good thinking deals with causes and effects and leads to logical, constructive planning; bad thinking frequently leads to tension and nervous breakdowns." – Dale Carnegie

"Today is our most precious possession. It is our only sure possession." – Dale Carnegie

"Every day is a new life to a wise man." - Unknown

"The child says: 'When I am a big boy.' But when is that? The big boy says: 'When I grow up.' And then, grown up, he says: 'When I get married.' But when married, what is after that? The thought changes to 'When I'm able to retire.' And then, when retirement comes, he looks back over the landscape traversed; a cold wind seems to sweep over it; somehow he has missed it all, and it is gone. Life, we learn too late, is in the living, in the tissue of every day and hour." – Dale Carnegie

"Be willing to have it so. Acceptance of what has happened is the first step in overcoming the consequences of any misfortune." - William James

"Let's not allow ourselves to be upset by small things we should despise and forget. Remember 'Life is too short to be little.'" – Dale Carnegie

"Why will doing a good deed every day produce such astounding efforts on the doer? Because trying to please others will cause us to stop thinking of ourselves: the very thing that produces worry and fear and melancholia." – Dale Carnegie

"Relaxation and Recreation. The most relaxing recreating forces are a healthy religion, sleep, music, and laughter. Have faith in God—learn to sleep well—Love good music—see the funny side of life—And health and happiness will be yours." – Dale Carnegie

Bonus Insights from How to Stop Worrying & Start Living by Dale Carnegie

Three bonus methods for calming your worried mind:



Law of Averages

As a boy, Carnegie worried about many things: he worried about getting hit by lightning, he worried his family wouldn't make enough money to put food on the table, and he worried he'd never find a wife.

But as he got older, Carnegie said, "**I gradually discovered that 99% of the things I worried about never happened.**"

In World War II, American Frederick J. Mahlstedt was preparing for German bombing raids on Omaha Beach by digging deep rectangular trenches for himself and his platoon.

When the bombing raids started, Mahlstedt was consumed with fear and couldn't sleep. By night four, he was a nervous wreck. But on night five, he realized thousands of bombs had dropped, but every member of his platoon was still alive.

Mahlstedt also realized since his trench was so deep, only a direct hit could kill him. "**I figured the chance of a direct hit was one in 10,000. After a couple of nights of looking at it this way, I calmed down and slept through the bombing raids** (paraphrased)."

Our minds love to worry about horrible events happening. As a species, we've evolved to more easily visualize bad outcomes than good ones, since bad outcomes can be fatal.

When we combine our "negativity bias" with what psychologists called the "availability bias" - the tendency to overestimate the likelihood of an event we can easily remember - then we tend to fret over events that have a very low probability of happening.

For example, plane crashes are easy to imagine and you hear about plane crashes on the news all the time. Therefore, you might think you should worry about your next flight. But the odds of being in a plane crash are roughly 1 in 11 million. It's reasonable to expect to be in a plane crash IF you boarded a flight every day for the next 30,000 years!!

When you consider the number of times a negative event has NOT happened, you're considering what Carnegie calls "The Law of Averages."

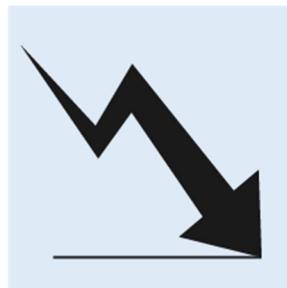
In the book Carnegie says, "**The phrase 'By the law of averages, it won't happen...' has destroyed ninety per cent of my worries; and it has made the past twenty years of my life beautiful and peaceful beyond my highest expectations.**"

Action Plan #1:

The next time you're worried, consider the number of times your fear has NOT happened.

Remember: you need to board a flight every day for the next 30,000 years to expect to be in a plane crash!

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Stop-Loss

It's natural for you and I to worry about a new problem or upcoming performance...**but how much worry is too much?**

A few seconds of worry can kick you into action to solve a problem or prepare for a performance, but would 10 minutes of worry help better solve a problem or better prepare for a performance?

More worry never helps.

Continuing to worry is like keeping your money invested in a failing company. If you don't take your money out, the stock will plummet, and you'll lose everything. If you continue to worry about the future, you'll lose all the time you could've spent living.

In the investment world, you can put a "stop-loss order" on your stock purchase, so that if the stock drops past a certain point, you'll automatically sell your position and avoid further losses.

Try applying the "stop-loss" principle to your worries.

I've learned to put a "stop-loss" order on my worry by committing to stop worrying the moment I release a video on YouTube. After I hit publish, I can't control what people say or do, therefore worrying beyond the moment I release the video is a complete waste of time, attention, and energy.

Action Plan #2:

When you're worried about a new problem, important project, or upcoming performance, ask yourself, "**At what point shall I set a 'stop-loss' order on this worry and forget it?**"



The Hourglass

During World War II, a noncommissioned officer named Ted Bengermino was maintaining the records of all American soldiers killed in action, missing an action, or hospitalized. His job also involved gathering dead soldiers' possessions and delivering them to their parents or close relatives.

Every day he feared making a mistake and missing a soldier's name or delivering the wrong artifacts to a dead soldier's parents. As the war went on, he literally worried himself sick. Near the end of the war, he developed a stressed induced condition called spasmotic transverse colon, a painful and deadly condition.

When he finally went to the Army doctor to seek treatment, he received life-saving advice. The Army doctor informed Bengermino that his troubles were mental, and he should imagine his mind was an hourglass with grains of sand slowly passing through the center.

The doctor said, "**When we start in the morning, there are hundreds of tasks which we feel that we must accomplish that day, but if we do not take them one at a time and let them pass through the day**

Bonus Insights from *How to Stop Worrying & Start Living* by Dale Carnegie

slowly and evenly, as do the grains of sand passing through the narrow neck of the hourglass, then we are bound to break our own physical or mental structure."

Action Plan #3:

When you're worried that you won't be able to complete the work in front of you, imagine each task as a grain of sand passing through the neck of an hourglass. Repeat the following mantra to yourself, "**One grain of sand at a time, one task at a time.**"