

The Four-Day Flexible Contact with Worry (Expressive Writing Exercise)

We are going to encourage you to take part in a writing exercise as part of developing greater *Open* and *Aware* skills towards worrying. This exercise will involve you writing about a worry that you have, over four days, for fifteen minutes each day. The key with this exercise is to stick with writing for the fifteen-minute period, noticing any thoughts, images and sensations associated with this worry, and urges to think of other things or to act upon the worry.

Writing About Worry Instructions (adapted from Markowitz, 2007):⁸

Find a blank sheet of paper and a pen. Sit in a comfortable spot for writing.

Identify a key worry that you have – this could be the most frequent or distressing worry that you have struggled with lately. Write this worry at the top of the sheet of paper. And then follow these instructions:

For the next fifteen minutes, we would like you to write about this worry. In your writing, we want you to really let go and explore your very deepest emotions and thoughts. You might tie the worry you write about to other parts of your life. For example, how is it related to your childhood, your parents, people you love, who you are, and who you want to

be? In addition, you may choose to write about what might happen or what the consequences might be if the situation you are worried about were to occur. Or you might write about what factors might make the situation more (or less) likely to occur. Whatever you choose to write, however, it is critical that you really delve into your deepest emotions and thoughts.

If you feel you have fully expressed your feelings about this potential problem before the fifteen minutes is up and have nothing left to write about, you may write about a different worry. Again, please be sure that you really delve into your deepest emotions and thoughts.

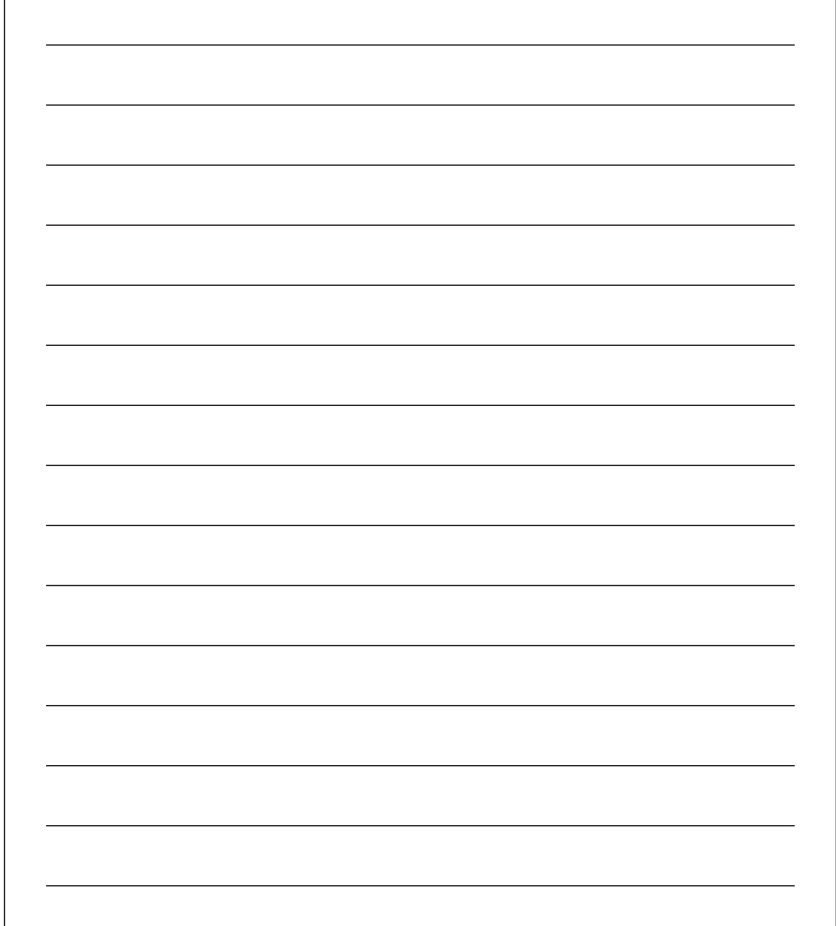
Ready? Start writing!

After Day Four of the writing exercise, reflect about what you noticed:

What was it like to write about your worries, connecting with your deepest emotions and thoughts?

What did you notice changed about your experience of worry? What remained the same?

You can write your reflections here:



Spend a few minutes getting in contact with these other advisers – what would they say about the situations you worry about?

Adviser 1 [Name:] would say:

Adviser 2 [Name:] would say:

Adviser 3 [Name:] would say:
