



## ANXIETY SOLUTIONS: CONTROL YOUR WORRYING USING THE T.O.P PRINCIPLE

---

### Do you spend time worrying?

There are so many things that can keep us up at night, from thinking about something embarrassing you said 10 years ago, to worrying about your important deadline tomorrow to something more serious like your health. No matter how necessary or realistic the thought is, we have to power to control it.

### How?

Using the following process, you can categorise your thoughts and worries and remove negative stressors from your mind. This is called **The TOP Principle**:

1. Write down some of your most common worries, let's start with 3
2. Think about how much control you have over that worry and categorise it into the following 3 sections (I've written an example in each section to help you better understand):
  - a. **Totally within your control** \* E.g. What you will eat for dinner (you have full control over the types of ingredients you buy and cook, no matter what your budget is)
  - b. **Out of your control** \* E.g. That time you called your boss an "idiot" by accident in a team meeting (there are no actions you can take to change the situation)
  - c. **Partially in your control** \* E.g. Collaborative processes such as a relationship (you can only control your part of the process, you are unable to completely influence the final outcomes as someone else is also partially in control)
3. Now that you have categorised your worries, you can **make action plans to turn the worries that are totally in your control into positive change**. Just make sure this change is realistic enough for you to stick to e.g.

### EXAMPLE:

**Worry:** *I'm becoming unhealthy and my clothes are starting to feel tight*

Action plan:

- a. Make some healthy food swaps, like plain popcorn instead of crisps
- b. Start using the stairs instead of the lift
- c. Go for an evening stroll after dinner

There are even ways to turn things you think are out of your control into something you can control e.g. if it really upsets you how cold it is in NZ, you can't change it, but you may be able to change the climate you live in (I hear the Sunshine Coast is lovely and warm for most of the year!).

**If you're unable to make any changes, and it stays as "out of your control", then you have to let it go.**



## **ANXIETY SOLUTIONS: CONTROL YOUR WORRYING USING THE T.O.P PRINCIPLE**

---

I know that it's easy to say and we've all heard it before, but we only have a finite amount of time and energy. By letting go of the things that are 'Outside of our control', we can refocus our energies towards the things that we do have an influence over. We always find these wise words a very useful reminder:

***"Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,***

***The courage to change the things I can,***

***And the wisdom to know the difference"***

The wisdom to know the difference - that's the hard part!

Nobody is perfect and we don't always react responsibly to stressors. That's OK, that's human. We're allowed to be angry, allowed to be stressed, allowed to be upset. We do, however, have a choice over whether we continue to stoke our stressed reaction.

So, the next time you are spending time worrying about something, if it is outside of your control, tell yourself there is nothing you can do and move on. It will be difficult to start with, but it will turn into a habit and become like second nature as time progresses.

**Thought for the day: *Worries don't have to rule my life, I can manage them with some simple, powerful techniques.***

**Source: The Stress Management Society**