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## Adaptive and Maladaptive Worry

Lyndsay T. Wilson 15.2K reads

Not all worries are bad, neither is worrying the same for everyone. In order to take charge of your life and understand how worry affects you, first it's important to figure out what it means to you personally.

So, let's ask ourselves again - how much worry is too much worry!

People tend to think of stress and worry as a fixed quantity; a fact of life in the same way as UV radiation or paying taxes. But consider the fact that in most cases, what stresses one person is completely unremarkable to another, and a third person may even receive it positively.

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Psychology 101 Part 2

**Quiz:**  
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## Same Situation, Different Interpretation

Going back to our skin cancer example – you might start to worry terribly, make a doctor's appointment and worry for days as you make yourself more and more anxious reading scary articles online. Or, you might make the appointment and then promptly forget about it. It's probably nothing, right?

Stress is not merely an external stimulus, but rather, an interplay between any organism and its environment. Whether a stimulus gets defined as stressful very much depends on whether that organism has the resources to effectively deal with that stimulus. So, it would be more

accurate to say, "I find this weird mole worrying" than "this weird mole is worrying."

## **Worrying Has Many Faces**

Typically, advice around worry management focuses on telling people to calm down, relax, maybe listen to some whale music and meditate. However, I'm sure you can think of someone in your life who would rather die than do any of this, and would in fact find the whole experience incredibly stressful! Because each of us has our own personal resources, coping skills and ways of interpreting the world, when we say "worry" we seldom mean just one thing.

## **Is Your Personal Worry Too Much?**

So, answering the question (how much worry is too much worry?) becomes a little easier. A good yardstick to use is this: is worry interfering with your ability to grow, connect with others, satisfy work and family obligations and generally do what you need to do in your life? If so, then this can be considered "too much" worry, or maladaptive worry. If, on the other hand, your worry is making you feel motivated, inspired and ready to act, then it's more likely adaptive worry – no matter what that worry happens to be.

## **Applied to the Real World**

In the real world, this means that there is allowance for our individual differences. A massive deadline in 12 hours could make a thriving Wall Street trader roll up his sleeves and accept the challenge, whereas the same might make a sleep-deprived new mother want to pull out her hair.

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