



Welcome to Week 3 of Virtual Peace Class!

Dear teacher,

This week we are talking about **Worrying**. Here is how I teach this short virtual lesson to my students:

Worrying is a totally natural thing to do but it's not really very helpful and it's definitely not any fun. This week we're going to learn a little about why we worry, what happens in our brains when we worry, and what we can do instead of worrying that can make us feel better.

Why do we worry?

Do you remember when we learned about the amygdala or "Amy" for short? The Amygdala is the part of the brain that tries to protect us from danger. If it thinks we are in danger it gets us ready to fight, run away or freeze (fight, flight or freeze). The amygdala is really helpful if we are actually in danger but unfortunately our Amygdala can't tell the difference between real danger and something that might just be unpleasant or something scary we are thinking about.

When we are worried or anxious we might be breathing a little faster and our hearts may be beating a little harder. Those are signals to the brain that we are in danger, so the Amygdala takes over. It shuts down the parts of our brain that do the thinking and the remembering and it gets us ready to fight, run away or freeze. It sends chemicals into our bodies that would make us run fast or feel strong if we were really in danger, but when we aren't in danger those chemicals just make us feel bad.



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We'll talk more about our brains next week but now....

What can we do about it?

When we worry we are just imagining that bad things are happening. Before I started practicing mindfulness I used to worry all the time. If I wrote down all of things that I worried about, the paper would stretch all the way to the moon! But if I wrote down all of the things that I worried about that *actually happened* the list would probably fit on an index card. The magic of mindfulness is that it helps us to notice what we are thinking about so that we can see when we are worrying and we can “change the channel”.

Remote Control Breathing

Some of you might remember doing a practice called Remote Control Breathing. In this practice we try to count our breaths. This is a lot harder than it sounds! When we try to count our breaths usually what happens is that our mind wanders away to think about something else – sometimes the mind decides to worry.

I like to imagine that my mind has a remote control device. I can set the remote to the “Counting My Breaths” Channel and I can be watching it for a while but then all of a sudden my mind will change the channel to the “What’s for Lunch?” Channel, or the “I Wish I Had a Unicorn” Channel, or the “What if Something Bad Happens?” Channel. As soon as I notice that my mind has changed the channel I can make the decision to change it back. I can change it back to the “Counting My Breaths” Channel and start over again.

One of the main ways that we practice mindfulness is doing this over and over. We notice that our minds have changed the channel and we make the decision to change it back. The more we practice this the easier it gets! And once it gets easier to do when we are practicing mindfulness then we can start to do it when we aren’t practicing mindfulness. We might be playing a game but then suddenly we notice that we are actually worrying. Once we notice that we can decide that we don’t want to watch the “Worrying” Channel. It’s a terrible channel. We can change it to

something more fun like “Why is the Sky Blue?” Channel. It is up to us to decide what we are thinking about. And that, my friends, is a superpower.

Let’s try it! Watch this video and practice Remote Control Breathing with Ms. Ryden. [Remote Control Breathing](#)

So, what else can you do when you feel worried or anxious?

There are two things that can really help when you are feeling worried or anxious. One is to practice gratitude and the other is to replace worry with love. Worry is not very useful but love always helps. When we take time to notice all of the little good things in our lives, when we take time to feel grateful for what we have, even during hard times, we hack our brain’s tendency to focus on negative things and forget about good things.

For a fun way to practice gratitude, try this Gratitude Scavenger Hunt! (see pdf included with lesson)



Replace worry with love

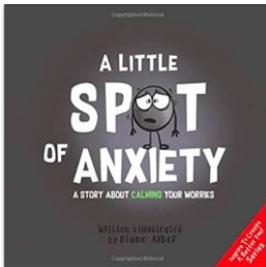
Another great thing to do when you feel worried or anxious is to practice Heartfulness. When we practice Heartfulness we are thinking kind thoughts about ourselves and sending kind thoughts to others. Replacing worry with these loving thoughts is a great way to change the channel and get your mind focusing on something positive. Practicing Heartfulness also makes you want to do kind things so when you are finished try to find a way to help someone else. You could choose

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someone in your family to be your **Kindness Pal** each day and see how many kind things you can do for them!

Watch this video to do a little Heartfulness practice with one of our Mindful Mentors, Alex! [Heartfulness with Alex](#)

Storytime!



Listen to a nice story about dealing with anxiety and worry!

A Little Spot of Anxiety is a nice story that shares a cool way to help handle worries and anxiety. You'll notice that the book teaches you to do something that is a lot like Take Five breathing. It's a great thing for you to add to your toolbox! **Listen to the story here:** [A Little Spot of Anxiety](#)

For parents or caregivers:

Here is an article that I. wrote for the Washington Post that you might like to share with your parents to help them learn more about what the students have been learning about worrying and mindfulness in Peace Class:

[Mindfulness and Coronavirus Anxiety](#)

Here is some more information for your parents or caregivers:

[On Anxiety and Worry](#)

Have a great week everyone!!!

With much love,

Ms. Ryden

