



Children's National™

Chaplaincy Services

A close-up photograph of a woman with long, wavy brown hair. She is wearing a dark blue, textured sweater. Her head is resting on her right hand, which is propped under her chin. She is looking downwards with a somber or worried expression. The background is a solid dark grey.

Worry

**It's like being fenced in by barbed wire! I don't know how not to worry anymore You just can't stop your mind. It goes on and on and on. It's really just another word for 'scared stiff'. I can't control it. It controls me.**

These are some of the ways patients, or parents, or family members have described the experience of worrying.

The common theme is that worry is so much stronger than we are. It takes on a life of its own – both external to us and within us. Worry grips us in its unrelenting fixation.

Worry is not merely a concern – it's often a compulsion.

When we have a serious illness or injury, or someone we love does, it is natural to have worries.

We are going to be concerned about how long this will last, whether the decisions we make are the right ones, if whatever is happening is going to change the way we get to live our lives.

Sometimes we get so caught up in these worries that it feels as if we will be wandering around in them forever. We are stuck in the "what if?" loop.

It's important to find a way for both our minds and our hearts to receive some peace and to free them to move toward the future – whatever that may be.

Worry takes away all the positive energy we have for managing life's difficulties- drains us dry and empty.

But it's so much easier to tell yourself to stop worrying than to actually stop worrying.

When we start feeling that our worries control us instead of us controlling them it's time for some help.

Consider what you really need – right now – and who can help you meet that need. If you are here in the hospital you might ask for a social worker or a chaplain. If they can not immediately meet your concerns, they may be able to help you plan a course of action. They can certainly be with you, listen to you. A Chaplain can pray with you, help you remember where your strength and hope come from.

It's hard to feel your own power and authority when there is often so little you can do but wait and learn and wait. But there are some things you might try.

For instance, make a list of all your worries, and see if you can put them in order from the most to the least worrisome. Give yourself permission to be concerned about truly important items. The ones at the bottom of the list – if you can address them and remove them, do so.

You might make a second list – of the blessings you have always had and new ones you receive each day.

Remind yourself that you are a capable person – keep a "pride" journal where you can tell the stories of the things you have done well. Pray. Walk. Eat some healthy food. Spend time with someone who makes you feel happy. Hug a dog. Believe you do not have to endure this alone.

*God, you tell us you will take care of us, that you never forget us, that everything we need is assured to us through your love. But it is hard to remember, and even to believe, when I am so worried. I need your strength to fill me so that I can reconnect to my own strength – the strength you have given me to live, to love, to hope. Help me to trust that I can manage this time in my life with your help and the help of others who care for me. Bless me. Heal my heart and my mind. Hold me. Amen*



**For more information, contact your chaplains  
Children's National Medical Center**

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