

News you can use...from your EAP

Study links propensity to worry to early death

Do you know that your personality may dictate how long you'll live? After studying 1,633 men over a 12-year period, researchers at Purdue University determined that chronic, excessive worrying can take several years off your life. Negative thinking triggers the release of cortisol, a stress hormone that can be dangerous when elevated for long periods of time, says study author Dan Mroczek, Ph.D. Unhealthy coping techniques, such as overeating or drinking alcoholic beverages to excess, may also contribute.

"We observed that neuroticism (chronic, excessive worrying) levels are a clear indicator of how long one can expect to live," Mroczek said. The good news is that participants in the study who found a way to reduce their worry lived longer. "Neurotic men whose levels dropped over time had a better chance at living longer," Mroczek said. "They seemed to recover from any damage high levels of that personality trait might have caused."

How can you reduce the negative effects of chronic, excessive worrying to your health and longevity? Dr. Mroczek said that those who worry excessively can learn to deal with their potentially negative personality trait in a positive way. "For example, very neurotic people can work toward dealing better with stress," he said. "They can seek counseling, take up yoga, schedule daily walks or other exercise to help themselves unwind, listen to calming music or even meditate."

Strategies to decrease worry and anxiety

Excessive worry is something that you can change. It involves changing your own thought process. You can train yourself to become a non-worrier, just as you trained yourself to fret. Here are some self-help strategies to reduce worry:

- 1. Take responsibility for making your "present" life work for you.** All you really have is your immediate experience. Take the challenge of appreciating and enjoying your life.
- 2. Have the courage to face whatever you are running away from.** Take action here and now.
- 3. Recognize the futility of worrying.** People sometimes believe, "If I only worry enough then..." Is there really anything you can change by this investment of your time and energy?
- 4. Practice "non-worry behavior."** Each time you're inclined to worry, remind yourself, "No amount of worry will change this situation, so I'm not going to worry at this moment." Give yourself shorter and shorter periods of time to worry.

Your EAP is here to help

If you want to obtain no cost counseling related to worry, anxiety, or stress management, or for information about other EAP services, please call **800-869-0276** or securely request services from the Member Access section of the EAP website: www.eapconsultants.com