What me, worry?

Chronic anxiety, or constant worrying, is made up of two components: First, the fear that something bad will happen and second, the fear that we will not be able to cope with that bad event. Of course, bad events do sometimes happen, but a person with anxiety tends to *overestimate* the potential for “bad” happening – i.e. Worst Case Scenario thinking. Also, worriers tend to *underestimate* their own capacity to deal with a bad event. Thus, people who are worriers spend inordinate time trying to avoid bad things happening and thinking about how they won’t be able to cope with it. This type of thinking can limit our capacity for joy, love, success, and adventure by a constant focus on limiting risk. And, the reality is, there is no way to avoid bad things happening. Life is a journey and, like most journeys, it is filled with both positive and negative experiences. There is really no way, unless we wrap ourselves in a plastic bubble, to avoid bad things from happening from time to time. We’ve all had bad experiences, but how we perceive the experience varies. Some people focus on how bad it was and how they can avoid the next one (the worriers), while others tend to focus on the fact that they survived and coped with whatever happened and feel more confident about their ability to handle future negative events. This second group of individuals tends to worry less and “live” more. They do not underestimate their own capacity to deal with the negative things that happen in life. This is an attitude to strive toward – it helps us to live our lives to the fullest and it helps us to model that attitude for our children (i.e. a “you’ll be fine whatever happens” approach to life). As an exercise, write down some of the negative events that you’ve had and then write all the things you did to cope with that event. Finally, list the ways in which this event made you stronger!

“Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its joy.” Leo Buscaglia