

The Movie in Your Head Isn't Real

Objective: To help you understand that your worries are not real and your mind is just playing a trick on you.

Do you watch scary movies? Do you cover your eyes when you see gore? Do you jump or even scream when some horrible monster suddenly appears with drooling sharp teeth or a knife in his hand? Part of the “fun” of watching these movies is the powerful emotional and visceral reactions you have because your mind is tricking you into thinking that what you are watching is real, even though you know you are just sitting watching a movie in the theater or at home.

This is a little like what happens when you let your worries get control over your mind. It is like you are watching a Worry Movie in your head, expecting something bad to happen, and you feel like it is real. The Worry Movie in your head might even cause a physical reaction in your body and your heart might speed up, you might feel sweaty, or your stomach might feel like it is tied in a knot.

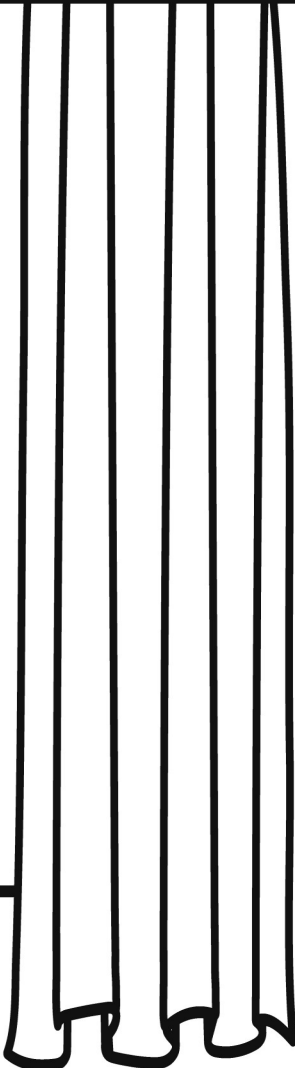
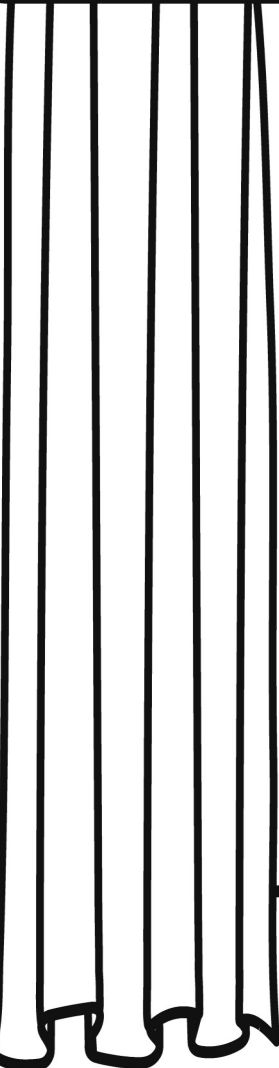
The difference, of course, is that when you leave the movie theater or turn off the TV, you are back to reality and you are fully aware that your reaction was entirely a fantasy. As you leave, you might think about the special effects in the movie, or the actors, or the way that other people reacted. You might be thinking about going home or perhaps going out for a snack. You are back to reality.

But when you play a movie about your worries in your head, you never really leave the theater or turn off the TV. You might say to yourself “this probably won't happen” or “I'm stupid for thinking about this,” but your mind and your body never quite accept the fact that your worries aren't based in reality and that the things you are imagining aren't really dangerous.

Test This Concept Out

Begin on the next page by drawing a picture of your most disturbing worry as if it were a movie playing on a screen. Put as many details as you can in the picture and give the movie a title. Then follow the instructions on page 3 which will help you learn to observe your worries without responding to them as if they were real.

Title:



List Actors:

Activities to Teach Your Mind That Your Worries Are Not Real

1. Find a really scary movie to watch at home. Before you turn it on, relax in a comfortable chair and breathe deeply for about five minutes. Now, set your mind to remember this is “just a movie.” Skip to a place in the movie that you know will be scary, but emotionally distance yourself from what is going on so that you don’t react with fear. Pretend that you are watching an ordinary event, like a garbage truck picking up the trash.

How successful were you at blocking your emotional reaction to a scary movie? Rate yourself from 1 = not at all successful to 10 = very successful. _____.

Describe how easy or difficult this was for you.

2. Now sit back again and relax and close your eyes and pretend that you are watching a movie of your worries. Think about whatever worries you most, making the images in your mind as real as possible. Put in all the details as if you were watching an actual movie. Again, emotionally distance yourself from what is going on in your Worry Movie. Pretend that it is just a documentary about something vaguely interesting to you.

How successful were you at blocking your emotional reaction to your Worry Movie? Rate yourself from 1=not at all successful to 10=very successful. _____.

Describe how easy or difficult this was for you.

3. Run your Worry Movie in your head for five or ten minutes every night for a week. Note how successful you were each night at thinking about your worries but not reacting to them emotionally.

Date	Rating	Comments