

36. Indulging in Worry with Dr. Michael Hersh



FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

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Arpita: Hi everybody, and welcome to another episode of Doctors Living Deliberately. I'm here today with Dr. Michael Hersh. Who is going to enlighten us on worry, how we indulge in worry. Hey Michael. How you doing?

Michael: I'm good. I love getting to chat with you and you know, I think what we're talking about today is worry which is something I am very familiar with. What do you think about worry?

Arpita: That's what I was gonna say. I was like this is probably one of the biggest things that consumed my mind earlier on. And I'm not saying that it still doesn't, we all worry about things, but it's being, again, having that awareness around when you're doing it. But for me it was almost always worry about the kids or worry about money or what's gonna happen if people don't show up to work. You know? So the worries that I had really were consuming me and making it so hard to live in peace, quite frankly, and recognizing that my worry wasn't really helping me get anywhere, wasn't making things any better, really became a game changer for myself. I can choose to spend the energy there, or I can choose to spend the energy and things that might actually be more productive. How about you? Tell me about the man worry.

Michael: You know, I don't know if it's man worry, but like worry is, I'm kind of an expert at that, right? So this has been a lifelong battle for me. And I remember being a kid, and I don't know if you've ever seen those little worry dolls. I think they're basically tiny woven figures and before you go to bed at night, you're supposed to give your worry to one of these little figures, and then you put it under your pillow. And the goal is that, that these little figures hold your worries so that you can sleep at night. And I remember getting this as a kid and so worry has been something that has been present for me my entire life. And it's only something that I've more recently started to try and sort through and figure out. And I think a big inspiration for this is I see a lot of this in my own children now, right? And so I wanna figure this out for me so that I can teach them a better way. And I think that is, has been one of the biggest inspirations for coaching for me in general, is how do I figure this out for me so that I can set my kids up for success and a different trajectory.

Arpita: Yeah, totally. And I think, you know, as you are talking about setting our kids up and thinking about our kids, the first thing that comes to my mind is the anxiety, right? That they have. And that is, I think a lot of that is due to the fact that they have these worries or these fears. And so when we can start to give everybody in our life, including themselves tools of what we can use, even little one-liners for what we can bring in our brain to remind ourselves of how necessary is worry in reality? I think you just did this course as well, I did the trauma mitigation course with Dr. Kemia Sarraf who was in episode one and two. And, you know, I had one of my classmates in that session, he said a quote that really kind of stuck with me, it resonated. But he said, if one thing is certain, it's that we will have uncertainty in our future. So when we can embrace that is when we can actually start to relax and that really hit me hard. 'cause I'm like, oh yeah, like we are so tight and wound up. Like if you just become present in yourself and notice how intensely wound up we are, it's with that worry. And so when we can maybe consider releasing that and letting things happen as they happen, it's a much more relaxing space. So I just, I love that little quote.

Michael: For sure. Yeah. I mean, there are so many emotions. I think worry is a prime example of what are called indulgent emotions, right? So these are emotions that they just feel comfortable, they feel like they're supposed to be there. Right? So in, in addition to worry, other examples are kind of boredom or self-pity or feeling comfortable or uncomfortable or doubt. Overwhelm is a big one for, I, I know overwhelm is a big one for both of us, and they all feel necessary. They all feel like they are supposed to be there, but none of them actually get you what you want in life, right? So when you are sitting and you're spinning in worry, what's

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gonna happen? I can't handle one more thing. And so you spend so much time spinning in kind of the indulgence of the worry that you completely lose sight on what is right in front of you. You spend so much time either in the past or the future, that you completely miss out on the only moment that we ever truly have, which is right now.

Arpita: And it can show up, I think in a way that's so sneaky. These like indulgent emotions, like you're saying, like I would always catch myself saying I'm so busy, or I can't do that because I'm too busy or I'm exhausted, you know, I've got too many things going on. I'm exhausted. And so part of it is also recognizing that if that's become a go-to for you, just kind of an excuse where you might really be busy, but maybe if you could shift the way you're thinking about it to be more, look at how much I accomplished today. Right? Rather than using it as an excuse to kind of draw out in the world when you're having conversations with other people. So, yeah.

Michael: And this is, I think, been kind of a theme throughout all of our episodes is raising that awareness, right? So we have about 60,000 thoughts per day. One to two thoughts per waking second. And I've heard it said before, I like it a lot. It's that the mind produces thoughts, like the mouth produces saliva, right? And so it's always going on. It's always churning in the background. And most of the time we are not aware of what is going on at all. And so taking a moment to pause, and to get curious about what is going on. Why am I so worried about this? And is the worry serving me? And most of the time I'm gonna skip to the end, most of the time the answer is no. It's not getting you what you want. Because the truth is things are gonna happen the way that they happen. Whether you worry about them or not, things are gonna happen anyway. So spinning your wheels in the moment, trying to figure out what you will do when this thing that might happen either does or does not happen. It doesn't get you where you want to be, so you can sit here now and be thinking about it and try to figure out what you will do and how you will pivot, or you can just deal with it when it happens.

Arpita: I think that's the key there is that a lot of times we think that when we're worrying about it, we're essentially preparing for handling it when it happens and when we can start to recognize how much energy we're putting into it when we're doing that for something that may or may not even happen, that's where you can kind of maybe take a step back and say, okay, do I really wanna do this? Do I really wanna expend all this brain space and time and energy, and quite frankly, your emotional state too. Feeling this worry, or can I just sit in that discomfort of saying, okay, I'm not gonna worry 'cause that becomes a habit too, you know, it's like you said, like we've been talking about, it's an indulgent emotion. It's become comfortable to worry. So to be able to say, you know what, I'm just gonna let this go and let this happen as it's gonna happen, that's not gonna feel comfortable when we do that. So you're gonna have to choose that discomfort of not worrying to get to life as it happens and then deal with it as it happens. I think there's a really, there's a comedian, Bill Burr that has this little clip that you guys can look up on YouTube and it's, It's a comedian with some nice little f-bombs, but he summarizes it in two or three sentences and it's hysterical. So, you know, just we can choose to sit there and worry or we can just freaking deal with things happening as they're gonna happen and deal with it, when they happen. So,

Michael: Yeah, because when you spend so much time kind of ruminating, right? You're thinking about the next thing. How much time you have to do all the things that you have to do, you're creating more discontent for yourself. You're creating anxiety. It can be a big driver for depression, and the worry just compounds itself, right? So you end up circling in worry. The worry begets more worry. And you know, there's this mathematical equation that suffering equals pain times resistance. And so the more you are resisting, what could potentially happen in the future, the more suffering you're creating for yourself? So how can you lean into the fact that as

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you so eloquently quoted at the beginning of the episode, that the only certainty is uncertainty. How can you lean into the knowledge that you have to be okay with some uncertainty in life with the goal of reducing your own suffering?

Arpita: Right, exactly. And I think part of the other thing is also noticing, like when we say like, I don't know, or I, I'm confused. I can't figure that out. It's part of the same thing, you know, that leads to us a lot of times procrastinating, not moving forward in life, not being able to do the things that we wanna do. So, like I said, it shows up really in a sneaky way sometimes these indulgent emotions and it keeps you from moving forward. There's another quote from Pema Chödrön that it's a long quote, so I'm not gonna put it here, but if you look it up, she's talking about how, you know, when we are not able to recognize that things are always in transition and when we're not able to accept that as what life is, that is also what creates this sense of constant worry because we're not accepting that that is the beauty of life, right? Things are gonna continue to change and evolve, and it may not look good sometimes, and it may look amazing sometimes, but to sit there and waste the space of that journey and the worry of it doesn't do us any good. And quite frankly, it doesn't really allow us to be our full potential selves in the world. So I will put it in the show notes, the reference. It's like I said, a little lengthy quote, but it's a very impactful one that I think just when we can look at and accept how things are going to be as being just as they're supposed to be, it makes us get to a better space.

One of my other coaches also said you know, just accept everything. What if everything is happening exactly how it's supposed to? Right? And that is another one liner that I just bring up in my brain. Every single time something goes to shit, something isn't going the way I want, I'm feeling a little bit of overwhelmed, stressed, whatever it is. What if everything is happening exactly how it's supposed to? What is the gift in this scenario? What might be the gift in this scenario that I can't see right now? Any of the ways that we can shift the way we're thinking about it, rather than sticking in the worry is what's gonna get us to a better place.

Michael: Yeah. And so if you're listening to this what you'll notice is that Arpita and I have lots of kind of mantras and quotes surrounding worry. And number one, that is because this is so incredibly common, right? And number two, it's because it's something that we continue to deal with every day. So here we are talking to you all about why worry doesn't serve you optimally. It's also because it's something that she and I deal with every single day. You know, I told you that, you know, I was a tremendous worrier, even as a child, and that has not gone away. And we need to use quotes like this as a reminder to kind of bring back the intentionality as a reminder that, oh, why am I sitting here kind of worrying about kind of what the end of my summer is gonna look like or what Christmas is gonna look like when I'm missing out on kind of the moment right now? And so that is where the intentionality comes in. And so Arpita, what do you do when you notice that your mind is going to things that are not serving you, that is not keeping you present?

Arpita: Well, I have this wonderful husband who also has a coached brain and I think that's been very helpful because when we catch each other going into our spiral of you know, worry or thoughts that are not really productive or useful for us, we just have a way of communicating with each other to remind ourselves. And it's, it's uncanny somehow or the other, when he's in a funk, I kind of can pull him out of it and vice versa. So we've had a couple of times, maybe we're both in a funk, but the point is, is that when we can start to have the awareness around us being in that space, we are able to start to decide if we wanna continue to be there. And so, you know, having a little conversation saying, you know what, is this really this bad? What's the worst that's gonna happen? Why are we choosing to think of it this way? Did you think about this? Hey, did you forget about this component of it that's coming up? Right? So most of my worry, again, is revolving around the kids, revolving around the business and the practice and things like that. And so, that is a great way for me to

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have somebody to help me keep me in check. And I, I'm not a fan of these accountability partners necessarily 'cause I wanna be accountable myself. But as we've said that sometimes when you're in your own shit, you can't see through it. Right? You need somebody to help you wipe those windows clean. And so that's one of the ways is that I'm fortunate enough to have a partner in crime who helps me get through it.

And the other ones is I meditate, right? So when I feel myself really. Getting to a negative space, I will make sure that I'm implementing and keeping in check with myself, those practices that I put in place to regroup myself. I'll go outside for walks. I love being outside in the fresh air. And when shit's really hitting the fan, I'll do some yoga at night and that really kind of helps me get into a good space. And then I just really make sure I continue with my two tools. Every morning I ask myself, what am I thankful for and why? And every evening I tell myself, what are three things that went well today? And I list them out and that helps me regroup to what's good so that I can remember that focusing only on the worry of what may happen, what's bad, what I'm fearful of that is coming that's bad, is not really keeping me in a good space. How about you? Do you do any specific things or do you have any tools that help you kind of when you catch yourself in that worry spiral?

Michael: So, like you were just saying one of my favorite kind of coaching quotes is you can't read the label from inside the jar, so it's really hard to figure out for yourself when you're in this space. So I definitely use coaching a lot for this. And I do also try to be self-aware, like what you were just saying, trying to be that for myself. I love the thought download or the brain dump. That is probably one of the tools that I use the most often when I feel like something is off and I'm not entirely sure what is going on. Why am I spinning, just to sit down with a pen and paper and write literally everything down. When I think of meditation I think of kind of all of these thoughts like flying around in your head, and for me, a thought download is actually kind of catching those thoughts that are flying around and capturing them and writing them down. And I find that when I do that, it just totally clears the air for me and I can actually get back to being in the present moment. And it's just, it's such a, a simple tool of just writing down everything. And it's just for you, right? You don't have to do anything with it. You can, there are definitely some things, some ways that you can use a thought download to kind of figure out your next step, but you don't even have to do that, right? You can just start by writing down all the things and just clearing some space for yourself. So that's one of my favorite tools.

Arpita: One other thing that I just thought of too which I'm surprised this was an afterthought. But I think some of the most powerful sessions I've had when I've had the worry or the fear of what's gonna come up is when I'm asked, okay, let's just assume that happens. Let's just assume the worst freaking case scenario is happening for you. Then what? So what? What are you gonna do next? Right? So part of that fear that I've noticed comes from me, my brain not letting me go past the fact that the fear is there, right? So, let's go there. Let's go to, okay, let's assume that everybody quits and nobody shows up at the office. Then what are you gonna do? Guess what? We're gonna shut down the office that day and we're gonna figure out admin time and figure out how we hire people. I mean, let's assume that the kids get sick with Covid at school and they can't go and they've got nobody there locally to help them. You know what? We're fortunate enough to have the means to go down there and take care of them ourselves and figure it out for them. So our brains create these scenarios and a lot of times it's this, you're gonna die scenario. It's the caveman brain that there's no troubleshooting and fact finding and problem solving at the end of it. So if you can allow yourself to just go there, you will be amazed of all the things that your brain will create as solutions and that that's one tool that's really, really helped.

I'll say a lot of this just goes back to the fact that we don't want to be uncomfortable, right? We don't like feeling the shitty emotions, and so that's another piece of this is if we can start to become a little more present

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with those crappy emotions, be more accepting and allowing of them to be there. Be able to embody it and be present with it and let them be in us and move through them, it tends to go away and we feel better and come out on the other end where we can be more productive. So it's twofold here. Let's go to the worst case scenario, and then let's allow ourselves to feel the shitty emotions for God's sake. It's not gonna kill us. Right?

Michael: Yeah, I mean that actually is one of my favorite questions when I'm coaching is exactly what you just kind of outlined of, well, what if it happens? What's the worst case scenario? People always wanna talk about the best case scenario, but no, let's talk about the worst case scenario. When you put your mind to work, when you force yourself to answer that question, you immediately take yourself out of the indulgence. Right? Now you're no longer just feeling bad for yourself and, and kind of just, you know, thinking about, well, what if? You immediately put yourself back in the driver's seat and like, oh, of course I know what I would do. Right? Of course that's not a problem for me. What if I lost my current job? Well, I'm a doctor for goodness sake. I will go find another one. Right. I, you know, and, and the moment you can put things back into perspective, you're good. You immediately have taken control. And again, you're back in the driver's seat.

Arpita: Yeah. You're back in that relaxing space. Yeah. Yeah.

Michael: So good.

Arpita: Oh, wonderful. I have enjoyed this conversation with you, Dr. Hersh. It's been fun as always. Any final tips or tidbits that you wanna give to our audience today before we sign off?

Michael: I mean, I think again, it's just allowing yourself to be in tune with what's going on for you. Being able to recognize when these things are coming up, when the worry is stealing you away from your present moment and the things that you want to be doing, right? And so allowing yourself to just tune into yourself, know when it's happening, and then just be intentional about moving forward. You know we've given a lot of quotes in this episode, but one that I also really like, and this is a paraphrase for sure, it's not verbatim, is worry doesn't take away tomorrow's discomfort, it steals today's happiness, right? And so, as long as you can stay aware of the fact that you are kind of losing your present moment and work on trying to recapture it, I think that's everything.

Arpita: So good. So, so good. All right. Well, Dr. Hersh, always a pleasure. It's good to see you and we will be back with more goodness, I'm sure soon, other nuggets that we can help our audience with. So thank you so much.

Michael: Absolutely, and we'll see everybody on the next episode. Take care.

Arpita: Bye-bye.

Michael: Bye.