

## THE “JUST WORRYING” LABELLING TECHNIQUE

As a preamble to discussing this technique with a client it is often helpful to differentiate worrying from constructive problem solving. Worrying involves repetitive circular thinking, which is associated with anxiety and produces no enactable practical outcomes.

This technique simply involves a person labelling worry as “just worrying” and then bringing their attention back to their breath or to simply change the subject of their thinking. Every time a person catches themselves worrying they just label it again and change the subject. It doesn't matter if a person does it 10 times in one minute or if they only realize they have been worrying after a period of 2 hours and then apply the technique. The important thing is that the person applies the technique when they realize they are worrying.

This technique involves no criticism or internal struggle, just simple non-judgemental labelling. **Therefore it is important in this regard that the client does not change the label from “just worrying” to “don't worry”.**

This technique is very powerful and most people find that their worrying thoughts dissipate almost totally within a few days. Then they usually start worrying about a week later because they have forgotten about the technique through lack of need to use it. At that point a reminder of the technique usually suffices.

The same technique can be applied to other disturbing repetitive mental events using labels such as “just doubting” or “just criticizing”. This is subtly but significantly different to avoidance. It is not running away from the aversive mental stimulus. Rather it is the non-judgemental labelling which is encapsulated in the word “just”