

# Is Worry Rocking Your World? slow Your Mind, Starting with Your Body

By Alena Gerst, LMSW, RYT

If you worry about the future, or the present, or the past, raise your hand!

(My hand is up)

Some of you who have taken my yoga class have heard me talk about the [prefrontal cortex](#), a region in your brain having to do with worry. In yoga classes we sometimes refer to it as the "front-brain", or as I like to call it, **the "Worry Brain"**. It is the last region of the brain to mature (which may explain the sometimes baffling behavior of teens!), and also what separates us from most other life forms.

This is the part of the brain that helps us pay attention when we're driving, working, or selecting and preparing our food. It helps us adjust in life transitions, and consider possible consequences of our behaviors. In short, we need this region of our brains to survive.

But what happens when the front-brain becomes overactive and we can't seem to stop worrying?

One of my clients is a chronic worrier. He worries about terror attacks, declining health, family and social relationships, running out of money. I venture to say he takes it one step further than worry. His concerns, many of which plague all of us at one time or another, can skid off the front-brain road into outright imagined Catastrophe.

Catastrophizing is the front-brain gone wild. And sometimes, as you may have learned, **reasoning with ourselves doesn't always work**. The worry creeps into our bodies, presenting us with physical symptoms like fatigue, headaches, digestive issues, difficulty relaxing, and even unexplained pain.

When prolonged worry takes hold and we can't talk ourselves out of it with words, we may be able to **coax ourselves into a calmer state starting with the body**. And the simplest way to start is with the prefrontal cortex, the front-brain.

It's as simple as resting your forehead on a supportive surface, like a yoga block if you're on the floor, or a desk if you're sitting in a chair. If that's too hard, fold

your arms on a table in front of you and put your forehead down on top of your forearms.

Once you've brought your front-brain to a restful physical position, pay attention to any changes in your breathing, and notice if your body begins to shift into a more comfortable place. And just let your body grow a little heavier.

You don't have to hold this position long. It can be a quick break for a couple breaths in the middle of your workday. If you're practicing yoga on your own, you can integrate this into a forward bending posture using a block, or take downward facing dog with support (block, blankets, bolster) under your forehead.

## The Broader Perspective

Worrying is part of being human. Without it, you likely wouldn't be around to read this article. And heaven knows I do quite a bit of it myself!

But sometimes a little scientific anatomy + ancient healing wisdom + an open mind can = the beginnings of relief, and with attention and practice, plenty more where that came from.

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