

The Worry Jar Technique

The Worry Jar is a simple but powerful way for children to manage worries. Instead of carrying them around all day, they can “put them in the jar” until it’s time to deal with them. This helps reduce rumination and gives them a sense of control.

How to Create the Worry Jar

- Use any **glass or plastic jar** (you could also use a decorated box if safer for younger children).
- Invite your child to **decorate** it with stickers, paint, or labels — making it feel personal and safe.
- Provide **small slips of paper and pens** nearby.

How It Works

1. When a worry comes up, the child **writes or draws** it on a slip of paper.
2. They **fold it** and put it in the jar.
3. Tell your child: “Now the worry is safe in the jar. You don’t need to carry it around in your head all day.”

Scheduling Worry Time

- Set aside a regular short time each day (e.g., 15 minutes after school or before dinner).
- During this time, open the jar and talk through the worries together.
- Afterward, put the lid back on — signalling that worries are “contained” until next time.

Why this helps:

- Children learn that worries don’t need to control their whole day.
- By limiting worry to a “worry time,” anxiety becomes more manageable.
- Revisiting worries in a designated time helps children understand that some fears may lose power, learn healthy coping skills, and develop emotion regulation.

Older children can add an extra step by **categorising worries** into:

1. Practical worries: Things I can do something about (e.g., “I have a maths test tomorrow”).
 - Plan together: “I’ll revise tonight” or “I’ll ask for help.”
2. Hypothetical worries: “What if” thoughts with no action (e.g., “What if Mum’s treatment doesn’t work?”).
 - Practice letting these go: “I notice the thought, but I don’t need to solve it right now.”

Benefit: They learn to focus energy on solvable problems while letting go of endless “what if” thoughts.

Key Outcome: Both the Worry Jar and Worry Tree help children externalise anxiety, feel more in control, and learn healthy habits for managing thoughts. Over time, they see evidence that they are braver and more resilient than their worries suggest.

