

Lessons Learned & Other Stories

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What's Your Worry? Using Thoughts to your Advantage

By TEC Chair and Speaker Mary J. Lore

The economic slowdown has many CEOs worrying about the fate of product launches, growth plans, even the survival of their companies.

CEOs ask me, "If I worry, or focus too much on what could go wrong, is that the reality I create?"

What's wrong with worrying?

When "worry thoughts" occupy our minds, we let negative thinking determine our future. Besides adversely affecting our health and relationships, worry keeps us focused on what we don't want. When we worry, our brains are actually in a state of "fight or flight," incapable of determining what we want or being receptive to creative ideas on what to do next.

Let's be clear. Calmly acknowledging what is, or what could possibly go wrong, is very different than worrying and focusing *only* on what could go wrong.

The first step to break free from worrying is to become aware of how you are feeling as you obsess on what could go wrong. Is your heart rate elevated? Your neck or gut tight? Your forehead furrowed? Using your feelings as key indicators, you'll notice that when you worry you don't feel at peace and when you think powerfully, you feel at peace and inspired.

How to change your thinking

What we think is a matter of choice. So when we worry, we always have the choice to pause, and choose thoughts that deactivate "fight or flight" worry thoughts and move us in a direction that serves our purpose. The next time you catch yourself worrying, try this:

- Notice that you have slipped into a "fight, flight, or freeze" mode.
- Name your thoughts to separate you and what you want from your negative thoughts. For example, "There go my worry thoughts," or "Here come my scared-out-of-my-mind thoughts, again."
- Exhale as much as you can and take a deep breath.
- Ask yourself, "What can I think, say or do in this moment that's for the greater good?" (The greater good can be the example you are setting, the culture you want to create, the development of your employees, or the short- and long-term well being of the company. When you ask the question, the answer will come to you.)
- Re-invoke the state of wonder. Ask yourself questions that bring about wonder and possibility: If you could change the situation, what would it look like? How can you be prepared? If something has gone wrong, what can you do to fix it? How can you stay on course? How can you change the course? How can you be of highest and best service to your customers, suppliers, employees and investors?

Powerful thoughts keep us in a state of vision and possibility, moving us in the direction of what we want, even in the most difficult times. When we practice managing our thoughts, we are at peace and inspired. It is then that the ideas on how to handle or transcend difficulty shine through and we know the right thing to do. It is then that we achieve significant results.

Mary J. Lore is the founder and CEO of Managing Thought, LLC, which helps individuals and organizations develop self-awareness and change how they think and conduct business to attain long-lasting success. She is an internationally recognized leader, public speaker and executive mentor, and author of the award-winning book and audio book [Managing Thought: How Do Your Thoughts Rule Your World?](#)[®]. She chairs a CEO group, key group and gatekeeper group with TEC Detroit.