

The pleasures of worrying

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If I ever get a chance to take a walk with Bobby McFerrin, the man who sang "Don't worry, be happy," I think the odds are we shall end up in a dark alley where I shall initiate a deep discussion on the merits of his lyrical advice.

Of all the silly things that humans say to each other (and there is a mountain of it) perhaps the silliest is to say "don't worry" to someone who has sufficient reason to do just that.

A guy worries because he has cause to worry. OK. Either we offer him a solution to his problem or get out of his way. We don't do that. We slap him on the back and tell him not to worry. Cheer up, we say with disgusting bonhomie, things will work themselves out.

Oh yes, how do you know, you have some special insight. Let me tell you something real. Things do not work themselves out. Things get more knotted up and you get trapped in the snarls.

What sort of cretin, Mr. McFerrin, goes around being happy when his woes are having a winning day.

The worries are six goals up and you haven't even got the ball and you are supposed to be happy.

Do you sit at work, looking at this loathsome pile of problems that have wormed their way onto your desk and say to yourself, I will not worry about them, I shall be happy, so what if the world is falling about my ears and trouble is doing the two step tango outside my door, I shall go singing in the rain.

Worry, goes the traditional advice, solves nothing. This is also a fallacy. Worry is a great lubricant to thought. It is the essence of future action and if you did not gnaw at the problem you would not screen the options for their best possible application.

Can you imagine a day in your life without worry to keep it together? Where would you be if you did not acknowledge the hurdles of a work day and swanned on as if they did not exist.

Bruised shins, grazed elbows and lots of aggro.

Is that smart?

But if you are a worrier, then you check out the size of the obstacle, you make your game plan to overcome it and then you get over it. Intact. And then, even if you come a cropper at least you have had the satisfaction of knowing you gave it a good crack.

A person who worries is a man of substance, he knows there's a lot of bad out there and he dresses for the occasion. Life isn't a rose garden, life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans, and the one major defense that we have is the right to anxiety.

So, why is everyone we meet so against it. People tell you not to worry then go and worry themselves. They tell you worry won't get you far and they are biting their nails to the quick. Me, I love to worry. It makes it easier to take on the stuff that's shovelled at you.

You want to hold your own against a world determined to rabbit punch you on the hour, you worry. It will cut the odds on your favor. Don't listen to all this drivel about worrying won't get things done or relax, things will iron themselves out (ho!) or even, you will drive yourself to an early end if you are so uptight.

Rather than be shafted when you are not looking simply because you were busy being happy.