

LEARN TO LIVE BULLETIN

Your guide in wellness and mental health

Why Our Thoughts Keep Us Awake at Night

You're finally ready to crawl into bed after a long day, hoping for some much-needed rest, when suddenly every stressor you pushed aside during the day comes rushing back. If this sounds familiar, you're not alone. The quiet of bedtime often gives our minds the space to bring worries to the surface, sometimes making it feel as if there's no escape. But learning to recognize these thoughts and shift how we relate to them can meaningfully reduce anxiety and support better sleep.



Our thoughts, whether general worries or specific frustrations like we might experience when sleep doesn't arrive easily, can play a significant role in fueling restless nights. These worried thoughts might sound like, "I'm never going to fall asleep," "Tomorrow is going to be a disaster," or "I don't know how I'm going to pay that bill." If we take these thoughts as absolute truth, they feel very urgent – as if we must take action now, resolve some problem, or continue thinking until we find an answer. That sense of urgency keeps our minds alert.

Many of us have been caught in this pattern, wishing we could simply switch off our minds. While we can't shut our thoughts down on command, we *can* change how we respond to them. Once we notice that our thoughts are fueling our sleeplessness, we open the door to approaching them differently. There are several effective strategies, and the goal is to find the one that feels most helpful for you:

- **Challenge your thoughts:** Ask yourself: "Do I know for sure that this is actually true?" We can often identify reasons why our worried thoughts are not actually true or come up with reasons why we need not be so worried. We can then consider a more balanced perspective and replace our old thought with a new one. A thought like "I'll be useless tomorrow" could become "Even if I don't sleep perfectly, I've managed before."
- **Approach your thoughts mindfully:** Imagine your thoughts are like clouds passing in the sky and let them come and go, observing them without getting stuck on them. As you do, you might quietly acknowledge, "That's just my worried mind talking," and then focus on your 5 senses or your breathing. This may take some practice but helps many people welcome rest at night.
- **Write down your thoughts:** It might sound too basic or easy but simply putting your concerns on paper gives them a place to go and helps your mind feel like you've acted enough to set those worries aside for another day. Try it for a few nights and you might be surprised!

Instead of treating every thought as urgent and getting caught in the cycle of worry and sleeplessness, try experimenting with these approaches and see what works best for you. With patience and consistent practice, you can gradually loosen the grip of racing thoughts and create the conditions for a calmer mind and more restful nights.

Get Started Today

If you want to learn more tools and strategies to address anxious thoughts that keep you up at night, our Insomnia program is a great place to get started. Get started with a short assessment or jump right into the program by scanning the QR code or visiting learntolive.com/partners and entering access code **MMHG**. Learn to Live is available to you and your family members, ages 13 and older at no cost.

