

The Proven Four-Step Process

CALM

DENISE MAREK

to Transform Worry into Inner Peace

CALM: The Proven Four-Step Process to Transform Worry into Inner Peace

by Denise Marek

Introduction

It was 11 AM and we had just arrived in Orlando. Our hotel room wasn't going to be available for another five hours, so I asked my then 12-year-old daughter, Lindsay, if she would like to spend the afternoon at the Magic Kingdom. Lindsay replied, "I don't want to go today because I have a book."

I could hardly believe what I had just heard. My daughter would rather read than go to a theme park. Proudly, I turned to her dad and asked, "Did you hear what Lindsay just said? She doesn't want to go to the Magic Kingdom today because she has a book to read."

Before I had the chance to continue feeling so good about my incredible parenting skills, Lindsay interjected, "No, Mom. I didn't say I have a book to *read*. I just said I have a book. I don't want to carry this thing around with me all afternoon!"

In that moment, I realized just how easy it is to jump to conclusions and make assumptions. Sometimes our assumptions create a little humor, as was the case with my daughter and her book. Other times, our assumptions create a massive amount of worry. Those assumptions, the ones that cause you to worry, often begin as a "what if" question.



What if I don't have enough money?
What if I try and don't succeed?
What if I get rejected?

What if? What if? What if? Any time you answer your own scary “what if” question with a *negative assumption*, an enormous amount of worry can set in. That’s why the first step in the CALM process is so crucial: Challenge Your Assumptions.

The CALM process is a four-step process designed to help you to quickly and easily eliminate worry and cultivate inner peace:

- C - Challenge Your Assumptions**
- A - Act to Control the Controllable**
- L - Let Go of the Uncontrollable**
- M - Master Your Mind**



CHALLENGE

— your —

ASSUMPTIONS

Step One: Challenge Your Assumptions

This step is important because negative assumptions create unnecessary worry. But how do you go about challenging your assumptions? After all, they're what makes sense to you, so how do you break free from them? One strategy is to reframe the question from *possibility* to *probability*.

Here's how it helps. After compiling a hefty list of "what if" questions, you might ask yourself: "Is it *possible* these things will happen?" The answer is yes—of course, it's possible. All things are possible. Anything can happen. That's why, when we think about the unlimited possibilities of what might go wrong in any given situation, an enormous amount of anxiety can set in.

The good news is that you can regain your inner peace by changing the question. Instead of asking "Is it *possible*?" shift the question to "Is it *probable*?" In other words, ask yourself, "Is it likely that what I'm worried about will happen?" By simply changing the focus of the question from possibility to probability, you will gain a better perspective.

Make it Real:

On a scale of 1-10, how likely is it that what you're worried about will happen? Circle your estimate on the scale below:

(1 = least likely to happen; 10 = most likely to happen)

1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10

6

ACT

TO

CONTROL

THE

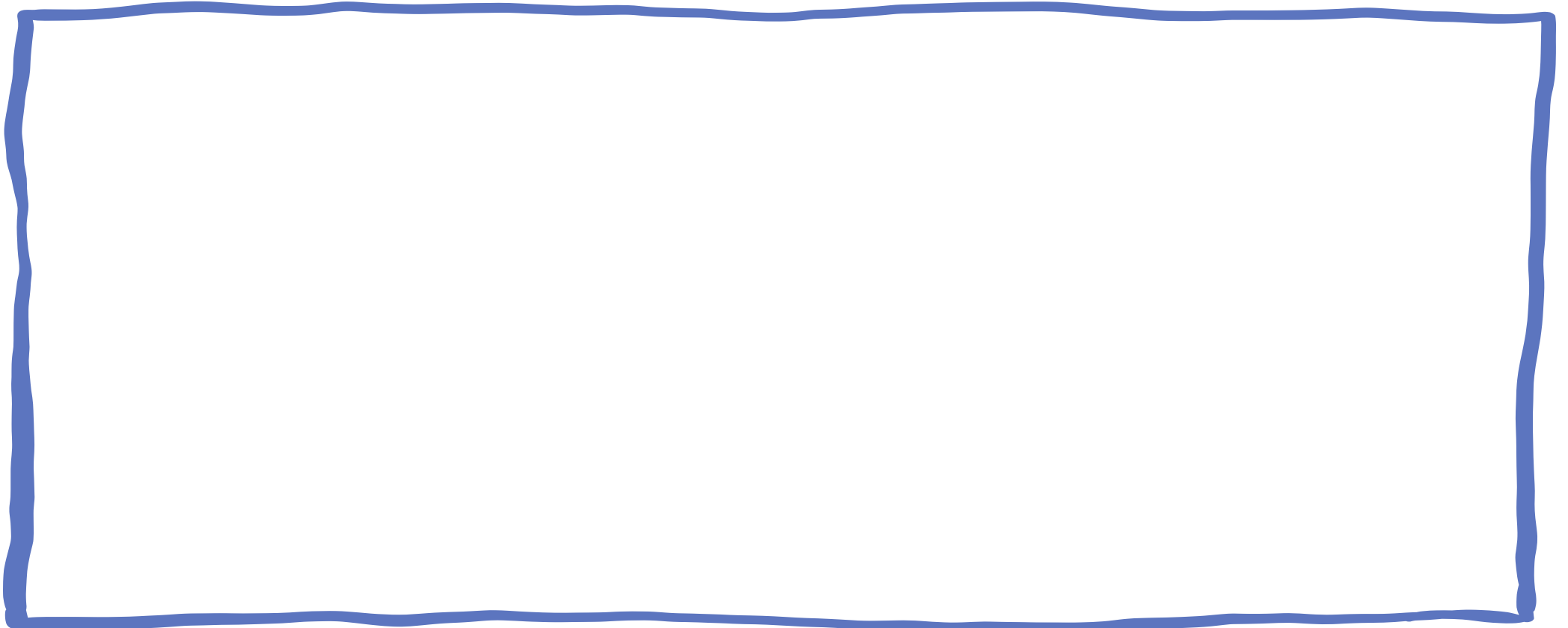
controllable

Step Two: Act to Control the Controllable

The second step is all about taking action to control the things you can. You see, sometimes worry is prompting you to take action. For instance, is worrying about your health prompting you to see a doctor, consult a nutritionist, or start an exercise program? Is worrying about certain aspects of your finances prompting you to talk with your financial advisor?

Make it Real:

In the space below, come up with a list of possible actions that your worries might be prompting you to take. Make sure to capture all your ideas in writing. It will keep you focused and on track. Then, follow through on your action plan.





Step Three: Let Go of the Uncontrollable

After you've done all you can to "control the controllable," you've got to let go. As Mary Hemingway said,

**"Worry a little bit every day and in a lifetime
you will lose a couple of years.
If something is wrong, fix it if you can.
But train yourself not to worry.
Worry never fixes anything."**

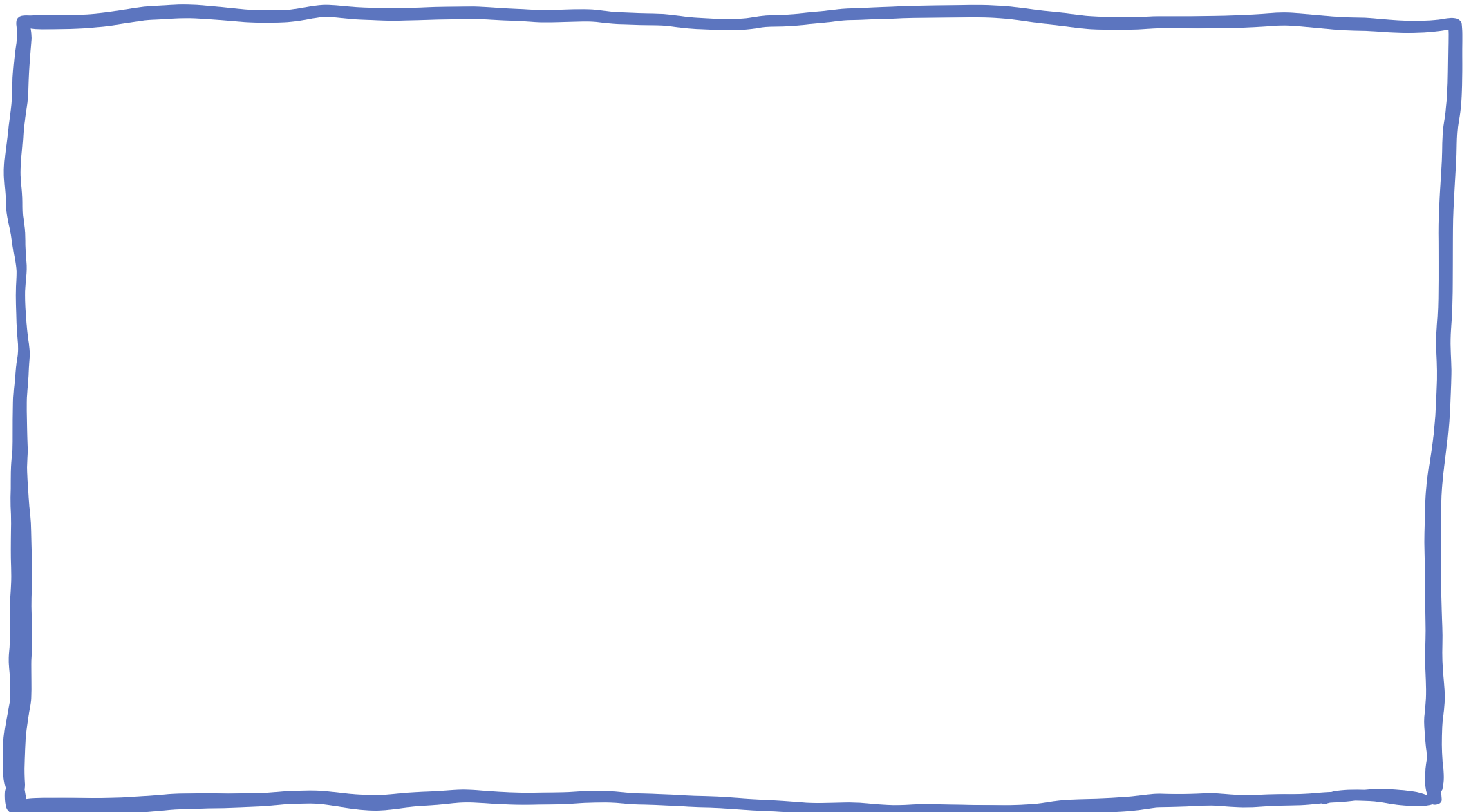
In my online course *CALM Online*, and in my book *CALM: A Proven Four-Step Process Designed Specifically for Women Who Worry*, I provide numerous strategies to stop worrying about those things which are beyond your control. One of those strategies is to extend kindness to others.

Why? Acts of kindness cause your brain to increase the production of serotonin. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter (body chemical) that can help reduce depression and make you feel peaceful and euphoric. How does this increase in serotonin help you to let go of worry? Just try feeling euphoric and worried at the same time. It's virtually impossible!

Make it Real!

You have the power to boost your mood anytime you choose simply by extending kindness to another.

In the space below, write down ways you can be good to others in your life. What are some acts of kindness you can extend to another right now? Be creative and have some fun with this!





Step Four: Master Your Mind

The final step in the CALM process, Master Your Mind, is all about guarding against negative thinking. This is important because it's your inner dialogue that largely dictates whether you feel worried or calm.

One strategy to master your mind is to end “what-if” thinking. To do so, try implementing these three cures:

1. Ask yourself: What is?

Instead of asking “what if,” change the question to “what is?” This new question helps you stop borrowing trouble from the future and rehashing trouble from the past by focusing on the present. For instance, suppose you were worried about getting a flat tire. Stop the “what-if” game by reminding yourself it's not happening to you right now. Right now, you're safe. Right now, you can check the spare tire in your trunk.

Reframing the question to “what is” is important because your brain doesn't know when you're actually in danger or just imagining potential danger. When you conjure up frightening scenarios in your mind, your brain sets off the stress response to keep you safe. This automatic response is fabulous if you actually have to protect yourself from danger. However, if the only thing you need to find safety from is your own thinking, it can really take a toll on your physical health. Do your mind and body a favor by consciously redirecting your thoughts to the present moment and acknowledging you're not in physical danger.

2. Ask yourself: Will it matter a year from now?

Will it really matter if your e-mails sit in your inbox for another day while you take some time out to enjoy your life, or to take action on a goal you've had on the back burner for a while? Will it really matter that you made one small spelling mistake on that document? Probably not. In fact, most of the things we spend our energy worrying about are really not that serious.

To distance yourself from current obstacles and concerns, ask yourself: Will this matter a year from now? This question will restore your perspective and remind you that most of the events in life that seem so urgent, stressful, and frustrating at the time are often insignificant in the grand scheme of things.

3. Affirm to yourself: I'll handle it!

If you feel what you're worried about will matter a year from now, affirm to yourself: I'll handle it! Think about everything you've handled up to this point in your life. Haven't you already handled the cards that life has dealt to you? Isn't it true that you'll also be able to manage whatever the future brings? Affirming "I'll handle it" will help you build belief in your ability to manage whatever comes your way. Once you believe you can handle anything, you'll find there really isn't anything to worry about.

Make it Real!

Turn a worried mind into peace of mind!

When those “what ifs” are wasting your time and energy, focus on the present, restore your perspective, and build belief in your ability to manage whatever may come your way with these three steps:

1. Ask yourself, "What is?"
2. Ask yourself, "Will it matter a year from now?"
3. Affirm, "I'll handle it!"

The next time you are worried—about money, your family, and/or anything in between—remind yourself to CALM and follow each of the four steps: Challenge Your Assumptions, Act to Control the Controllable, Let Go of the Uncontrollable, and Master Your Mind. Using these four steps will help you to transform worry into inner peace.

Want to learn more?

Visit www.DeniseMarek.com

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About the Author

Denise Marek is internationally known as “The Worry Management Expert.” In addition to being regularly called upon as the authority in her field by national and international magazines such as Martha Stewart’s Body + Soul, United Kingdom’s Red, Australia’s CLEO and Insight, and Canada’s Chatelaine and Canadian Family, Denise is the author of *CALM: A Proven Four-Step Process Designed Specifically for Women Who Worry*. As testament to their overwhelming success, her books have been published in several languages, including Spanish, Italian, German, French, Dutch, Bulgarian, and Korean.

Through her proprietary CALM™ methodology, lectures, consulting, videos, articles, and books, Denise has helped individuals and corporations around the globe free themselves from worry and cultivate inner peace. She works with CEOs, senior-management teams, and executives – along with their clients and the people they lead – helping them eliminate worry in their personal and professional lives. Denise’s client list includes companies such as American Express, Toyota, CEO Global, RBC Royal Bank, Deloitte & Touche, Dundee, Manulife Financial, TD Canada Trust, Clarica, and AIG. She is regularly asked to speak at corporate events and provide on-site training and consulting, resulting in more effective and efficient work environments, less stress, and greater strategic-planning success.

For more information about Denise, visit: www.denisemarek.com.

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