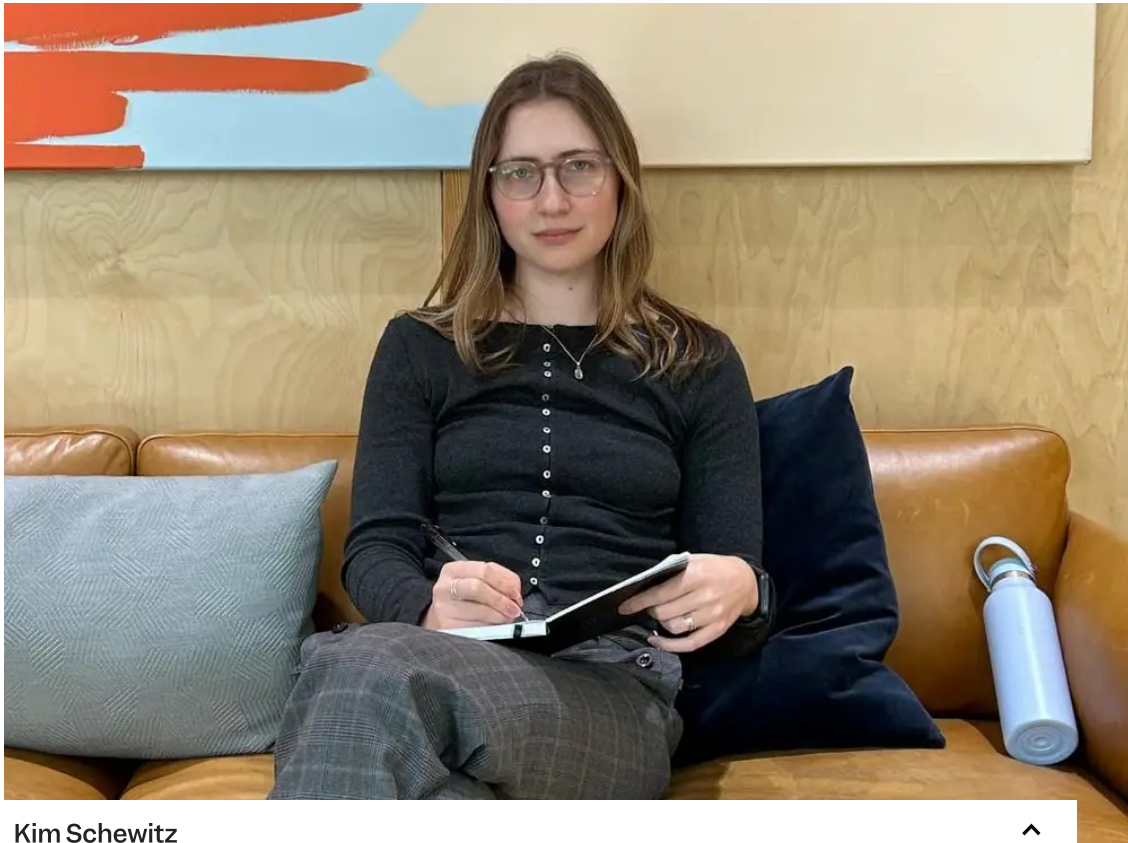


HEALTH

I used a 'worry window' for 2 weeks. I was more productive, but I'd change 2 things for better, longer-lasting results.

By **Kim Schewitz**[+ Follow](#)

Kim Schewitz



Mar 21, 2026, 9:43 AM GMT

[➔ Share](#)[🔖 Save](#)[🔊 6 min](#)

A "worry window" involves scheduling time to worry each day to prevent stress consuming our lives.

The goal is delaying worrying to stay in the present moment, giving you more control.

Health reporter Kim Schewitz felt more productive after trying it, but the pay-off wasn't big enough to keep going.

[What is the "worry window" technique?](#)[What are the benefits of del.](#)[How does cognitive behavioral therapy work?](#)[Why is the "worry win](#)

They say the only constant in life is change, but in my case, worry is on the list too.

How will I get my to-do list done in time? What if my alarm doesn't go off in the morning? Did I wish my cousin a happy birthday last month? Do my friends secretly hate me? Besides being relentless, taunting, and stressful, listening to my internal monologue is, frankly, time-consuming.

It feels like it robs hours of my life, draining my energy, and taking me out of the present moment. That's why, when my editor said she was looking for someone to try a technique designed to ease stress called a "worry window," I volunteered.

The technique involves making a note, mental or physical, when worries enter your mind throughout the day, and deferring thinking about them until a designated 15 to 30 minute window in which your only job is to, well, worry.

The aim is to delay worry and redirect attention to the present, over time giving you more control over anxiety.

There is no set way to do the worrying, but psychologists I spoke to recommended writing or typing out worries at around the same time each day in a relatively comfortable spot, but not in bed (you don't want to associate bedtime with worry).

Save stories you'll want to come back to, Kim!

"The muscle to build is to recognize you've written it down, it's going to be saved for your structured worry time, and then to redirect your attention," Dr. Simon Rego, professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, told me.

In his experience, pretty quickly, people realize that if they defer worrying and stay in the moment, the anxiety starts to die down.

The worry window draws on key strategies used in cognitive behavioural therapy, rooted in the idea that our thoughts and actions impact how we feel, Rego said. Through discussion with a therapist and practical exercises, CBT is "a way of not getting stuck in just how you feel, but learning to see how what you feel is influenced by, and influences, your thoughts and actions," Rego said.

The worry window was created for people with Generalized Anxiety Disorder, he added, but can be helpful for anyone experiencing stress.

I had found myself more stressed than usual. Fretting constantly over my seemingly never-ending to-do list and struggling to relax at the end of the day. I was skeptical that the technique would make any difference, but I was willing to give it a shot.

I worried for 10 minutes a day for 2 weeks

For two weeks between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m., I sat at my desk with a notebook and pen, and set a timer for ten minutes.

I spent most of the time writing out a list of everything I needed to do, and dividing it into urgent (to be done today) and less pressing (in the coming days). I also noted down approximately how long I thought each task would take, to help me plan.

I spent the rest of the time writing about my stress-related thoughts and feelings.

In retrospect, I probably should have done the suggested 15-minute minimum, since studies testing the efficacy of worry windows used 15 to 30-minute sessions, but that felt unrealistic for me at the time.

As my insurmountable to-do list was a big part of my stress, I didn't set any rules or intentions, to make my worry sessions as stress-free and fluid as possible.



When worries enter your mind outside of worry time, it helps to make a physical or mental note of them, Rego said. Kim Schewitz

Knowing I would worry later helped me dismiss worries in the moment

Pretty soon after I started using the worry window, I noticed some small but tangible differences in how I coped with stress.

Writing down everything on my mind during the day helped me figure out what to prioritize, and I often realized I was making a mountain out of a molehill. It turned out that remembering to fold laundry or reply to a friend's message did not warrant triggering my fight-or-flight response.

I feel like I got more done during the two weeks than I usually would. Instead of spending time worrying about my to-do list, scheduling tasks reassured me they were taken care of. I was able to identify and do what was urgent, and let go of what wasn't. Similarly, when a pang of stress randomly hit me during the day, I often found that reminding myself I had already worried about this thing, or was scheduled to, helped me to dismiss it.

I also found myself using other CBT techniques I learned in the past, like analyzing thoughts, during the worry window. For example, I would write down the more existential worries I was having or negative self-talk, and that would help me see how mean I was being to myself and notice familiar patterns. That helped me unhook from those thoughts and feel better.

It's wasn't fun

The biggest challenge was sitting down and doing my worry window every day, because it wasn't particularly enjoyable.

It was another daily task and, after a long day, I generally just didn't feel like it. Admittedly, there were a few days when I was in the office and had a social plan after work that I ended up not completing my worry window.

Dr. Sarah Berger, a psychologist based in Bethesda, Maryland, who specializes in CBT and anxiety and often uses worry windows with clients, told me that my experience is common. "The major downside of this technique is getting people to do it," she said, "nobody enjoys this activity. It's not fun. It's not supposed to be fun."

But people who practise regularly typically get great results, she said. She recommended committing to a "short, almost training period of 'let's try this every day for two weeks and see how it works,'" she said.

Next time, I'll follow the rules strictly, for longer

After my two-week experiment, I stopped scheduling time to worry. I felt like I hadn't seen enough of an improvement to muster the discipline required to do a fairly unpleasant activity every day. However, after speaking to experts, my perspective on this changed a little.

As someone with entrenched worrying habits, I would probably need to follow the rules more strictly and continue for longer to see significant, long-lasting results.

Rego said to ask yourself: "How chronically have you worried in your life? Is it new? Does it seem to have emerged in the last few months, or have I been a worrier for my entire life?"

"Some of those factors can influence the amount of time required to really retrain the way you think," he said.

Initially, I thought of the worry window as a potential life hack, but, as with most things good for our health, it's not a quick fix.

"It's a short-term sacrifice, like going to the gym where you're going to feel some pain today for the long-term gain of making progress towards some sort of life balance or worry control," Rego said.

I plan to try again when I'm ready to fully commit.



Legal & Privacy[Terms of Service](#) [Terms of Sale](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Accessibility](#) [Code of Ethics Policy](#)[Reprints & Permissions](#) [Disclaimer](#) [Advertising Policies](#) [Conflict of Interest Policy](#)[Commerce Policy](#) [Coupons Privacy Policy](#) [Coupons Terms](#) [Cookie Settings](#)**Company**[About Us](#) [Careers](#) [Advertise With Us](#) [Contact Us](#) [News Tips](#) [Company News](#)[Awards](#) [Masthead](#)**Other**[Sitemap](#) [Stock quotes by finanzen.net](#) [Corrections](#) [Community Guidelines](#)[AI Use](#)**International Editions**[AT](#) [DE](#) [ES](#) [JP](#) [PL](#) [TW](#)

Copyright © 2026 Insider Inc. All rights reserved. Registration on or use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).
