

MAX LUCADO®

INTERRUPT THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL

Anxiety is an out of control thought pattern. It settles over the mind like a severe weather system, spewing thunderclouds and casting lightning bolts. Life feels like an airplane in a tailspin. It feeds on *what-ifs* and *worst-case scenarios*.

What if the Coronavirus is unstoppable. What if a pandemic takes over? I'll be quarantined for weeks! The economy is sliding into a bear market. I'll lose my health. I'll lose my job. I'll lose it all. How will I survive on unemployment?

Down. Down. Down. Don't give in to this thought pattern. It's a sinkhole. Don't catastrophize your way into quicksand. Take a deep breath and then...

1. Pray about it. At the first hint of an anxious thought, Take the thought captive. Don't tolerate the devil, not even for a second. Lasso the anxious thought with a word of prayer. *Lord, there is an intruder at the door! Please take over!*

2. Identify the culprit. Generalities are not permitted. None of this: "I'm worried." Get specific: *Lord, I'm worried about the layoffs at work.* Now, that's better. But even more detailed: *I'm worried that I will lose my job. Will I be able to find more work? Will we have to move?* Specificity disarms anxiety.

3. Take a reality check. Is this a legitimate concern? Or is this a vague, ill-defined, rumor-fed possibility? *They say layoffs are inevitable. Who are they?*

4. Take an action step. Assuming the concern is legitimate, what can you do? Make a list of two or three steps you can Resist the urge to try to solve everything immediately.

5. Ask: "Can God solve this?" Is this challenge within his skill set? Is he overwhelmed by this setback? Are the angels pounding on the door of heaven trying to convince him to come out of hiding? Is he resisting?

I can't handle this challenge It is too great. I don't know what to do! I'm stumped, stuck, and stalled out.

No...I don't think so either. God is never baffled or belittled. Take the problem to him.

Reflect on this verse: "No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment, You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me, says the Lord" (Isaiah 54:17).

And, pray it through:

Lord,

Thank you that "before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely" (Psalm 139:4). Thank you that there are no surprises with you. Help me find deep comfort in the fact that you are unshockable and nothing is too great, too terrible, too large, or too heavy for you. Help me see the problems that I face today in light of how big you are. Amen.