

# Winning Against Worries

**I never thought I would have a heart transplant at age 14.** After surgery, I felt awful. It was strange to have someone else's heart inside my body. Don't get me wrong — I was happy to be alive. But I worried: *What if something went wrong with this heart too?*

My parents had no idea how I felt. They were so happy that I had the transplant. But I was lonely. It was as if no one else could understand what I was going through.

The hardest part was bedtime. Lying in bed, I could feel my heart pounding in my chest. Some nights, I had bad dreams. When I couldn't sleep, I played on my computer. I came across a chat room for kids who've had transplants. Some said they felt worried and lonely too. One kid taught me a trick for falling asleep: using my imagination to help me relax.



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**For a long time, I was nervous about my new heart.** Even though the doctors said I was fine, any little ache or pain made me panic. I couldn't stop worrying. I talked to a therapist who said it's common for kids with a serious illness to get caught up in a “worry spiral.” First, something small happens and I start to worry. Then, as I keep thinking about it, I worry even more. Soon, it spirals out of control!

I learned how to stay calm and talk myself down the spiral. Now, I tell myself things like: *It was just a dream.* Or: *I'm healthy now; my heart is working just fine.* When I notice worries start to build up, I talk myself down right away.

Last night, when playing soccer, I felt my heart pounding in my chest. My first thought was: *Oh no!* But then I said to myself: *It's OK, my heart is supposed to beat fast when I exercise. Nothing is wrong!* I knew I was going to be OK.

Sit back and relax.  
Picture yourself  
in your favorite  
place and answer  
these questions.



Where are you? What do you see? Hear? Feel? Smell?

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All the people you trust are there with you. Who is there?

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You feel really relaxed and happy! What are you doing?

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## WORRIED

Worries can spiral out of control really fast!  
What do you worry about? Write it down in the red boxes below.

**What if...?**

**Am I crazy?**

**I can handle this!**

**I'm strong!**

**CALM**

Talk yourself down to stay cool and calm.  
What can you say to yourself to relax? Write it down in the blue boxes above.