

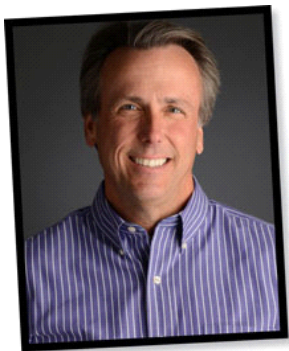
GROWERTALKS

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What, Me Worry?

Chris Beytes



CHRIS BEYTES

"Worry is a misuse of imagination." —Harris III

Occasionally, I'm asked how I come up with enough stuff to fill this magazine or my Acres Online newsletter. It seems like a tough job to the uninitiated.

The truth is, I have this muse who, though a procrastinator like me, has always delivered the goods. I need an idea—and poof!—there it is.

Like this column, for instance. I'm sitting at Orlando International, waiting for a flight to Newark and on to Amsterdam. It's Monday and my deadline day to have this piece to editor Jen Zurko or else she'll skin me alive. As of 10 minutes ago, while eating a Sbarro Stromboli, I had no idea what I was going to write about. But whether

prompted by the pepperoni or by the caffeine in my Coke, my muse got down to business and reminded me of several instances lately where the topic of worry came up.

"Write a column about worry," he said.

"Good idea. Thanks for the idea," I replied.

"It's what I do," he said, giving me a thumbs up and vanishing as suddenly as he'd appeared.

I'd jotted down that pithy quote about worry during the keynote at last month's Tropical Plant International Expo (TPIE) event by Harris III. An unusual name for an unusual presenter, Mr. III has been a professional magician since childhood. Later in life, he found a way to combine illusion with motivation, and to good effect, showing us how often it's not "seeing is believing." Instead, we often believe something we think we saw (this involved large cards with dots that he cleverly covered and uncovered with his hands, making us think we were seeing a card with one dot or three dots when there were actually only two dots).

But back to worrying. Are you a worrier? I know a few. Amazing how powerful their worry can be, all the images of what could go wrong, all the "what-ifs?" that run through their heads. Pessimists are somewhat the same way (at least to me, an annoyingly eternal optimist), always letting us know why something can't work, won't work, we tried it before, etc. etc.

I never considered that it takes a powerful imagination to worry; in fact, quite the contrary. I thought worriers lacked the imagination to picture a positive outcome to a situation. But in reality, optimists need a vivid imagination to run through so many possible scenarios in their heads, with so many pitfalls and obstacles.

As a non-worrier, I feel that worrying is a waste of time and energy. It doesn't solve any potential problems to worry about them. Whereas nobody has ever disparaged the power of positive thinking—in fact, they write books about it.

But what if worriers put their powerful imaginations to work by taking each negative thought that comes to mind and finding a way to counter it? Worry, then solve the problem you're worried about. Seems that would be a win-win for worriers.

For instance, say you're thinking of adding 10% more greenhouse space, but you worry that: 1) sales won't support it; or 2) construction will be delayed and won't be ready for spring; or 3) costs will be higher than anticipated. All legitimate possibilities. But now prepare an answer to each worry. Sales WILL support it because every other addition you've done has paid off. And you can get with your sales team tomorrow to start marketing the extra product. The space might be delayed, but you can build some incentives into the contract to help ensure it's done on time. And if it's not, you can plan a new summer crop for the new space and use it to get your customers excited about new offerings. And costs probably WILL be higher than anticipated because they always are. So add 5% to the budget. Maybe 10% for good measure.

If you have the imagination to worry, you also have the imagination to assuage your worries. And when you do that, you build an even stronger case for your project (or whatever you were worrying about) because you've covered it from both sides—obstacles and opportunities—giving you the best shot at success.

Well, they're calling my flight. Thanks again, muse! **GT**