



# What If Worksheet

It can be easy to obsess over potential scenarios and life's "what if"s. These "what if"s can be difficult to process, especially in connection with trauma. The first reaction may be to avoid these thoughts, but studies show that this approach may not be the best way to move forward. The "What If Worksheet" was inspired by Ethan Zohn and Lisa Heywood and created by Reclaim Foundation to help you process your own "what if"s.

*Please express caution when completing the What If Worksheet. If you find yourself spiraling beyond the worksheet or for an extended length of time: Stop, take a break, and return when you feel able. You may choose to work on this with someone you trust; Verbalizing it can help you work through sections that are difficult or where you may get stuck.*

## Instructions

- 1 Determine a single "what if" from your intrusive/obsessive thoughts or worries. Write it down.  
  
Think about the worst things that could happen based on your "what if". Let your mind go completely down this "what if spiral" for only a minute or two. Write down a few of your biggest concerns.
- 2
- 3 What would happen next? Write down actionable steps you would need to complete because of the items mentioned in each branch of the "what if spiral"?
- 4 Recognize the unlikelihood of your "what if" occurring. Write down the opposite of your "what if" spiral: What are some reasons the "what if" won't come true? What will you do since your "what if" isn't "right now"?
- 5 File your "what if" worksheet away. You have done the work to process your "what if" scenario and spiral. You created a plan to allow you to move forward knowing that you will always be prepared. You can rest assured you already know what to do if the "what if" comes true and all the reasons why it won't.

## The "What If"

What if...

## The "What If" Spiral

If your "what if" happens, what would the impacts be?

## The "What Next"

If the "what if"s came true, I would need to:

*Include actionable steps for each "what if spiral" above*

What are some reasons the "what if" won't come true?

If the "what if" doesn't come true, what will you do instead?



## Example Sheet

### The "What If"

What if...

*What if my cancer returns?*

### The "What If" Spiral

If your "what if" happens, what would the impacts be?

*I would miss work due to my treatments.*

*I would have large financial bills that would cause me to struggle.*

*My diagnosis would impact or put stress on my loved ones.*

### The "What Next"

If the "what if"s came true, I would need to:

*Include actionable steps for each "what if spiral" above*

*I would start a treatment plan that is guided by my doctors and that will work for my schedule.*

*I would work with my insurance, start a GoFundMe, or find other financing options to assist with the costs.*

*I would inform my loved ones and they would surround me with needed support.*

What are some reasons the "what if" won't come true?

*I am healthy.*

*I have been feeling great.*

*My doctors said I am in remission.*

If the "what if" doesn't come true, what will you do instead?

*I am going to train for a marathon.*

*I am going to go to the movies with my family.*

*I am going to enjoy non-hospital food!*

