

An Evolutionary Perspective

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Another theory to consider is that in many ways, worry is useful. This may sound ludicrous to you, but let's think about how humans have evolved over the centuries, and how the environment we live in has changed.

According to this perspective, stress and worry evolved in the human species because it was beneficial. Knowing how to respond to potentially dangerous threats in the environment was a good skill for our ancestors to have. Those early ancestors who were reckless daredevils would not have lived long enough to pass on their genes, and so in time the more cautious, worry-prone genes were preserved in future generations.



The banner features a bright orange background. At the top center is a white icon of a flask with a flame, followed by the word "EXPLORABLE" in white, uppercase letters. Below this, the phrase "Quiz Time!" is written in a white, cursive font. At the bottom, there are three white-bordered boxes, each containing a different image and a quiz title. The first box shows a pair of red roller skates on a wooden deck, with the text "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2" below it. The second box shows a fan of colorful pens, also with the text "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2" below it. The third box shows a Ferris wheel at sunset, with the text "Quiz: Flags in Europe" below it. To the right of these boxes is a white button with the text "See all quizzes =>" in orange.

Worrying - Past and Present

The trouble is, the environment humans evolved in is very different from the one we inhabit now. In the past, a jolt of adrenaline and cortisol would be just the right thing to flee dangers like lethal animals and hazardous situations. Today, most of us have never and will never encounter a potential fall off a cliff or a saber-toothed tiger.

Modern Worries

Modern man instead experiences more abstract worries like relationship troubles, credit card debt, toxic friends, unfulfilling work, existential fears and anxieties... the trouble is our bodies are still designed to respond in the same way as our ancient ancestors. When you feel your heart rate increase and your chest tighten in a stressful situation, you're experiencing a physical fight or flight response that saved many of your ancestor's lives. Most of us, though, wish we could control these automatic responses a little better.

What About You?

What do you think? Does this theory ring true when you think about your own worry?

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