



To Order Guatemalan Worry Dolls, go to: <https://athreadofhope.org/store/worry-dolls/>
 Use coupon code WORRYFREE through December 31, 2023 to get 10% OFF all Worry Doll products.

Worry dolls (or *quitapenas*) can be helpful to children and adults with worries, fears, sadness or nightmares that bother their sleep. Before bed, the child privately tells the doll their worries, sorrows and fears, sometimes whispering. The doll listens without judgment. The child says “I want to be happy,” thanks the doll, and puts the doll(s) under their pillow before going to sleep. The child gets important practice verbalizing difficult emotions and topics. Sometimes worry dolls specialize in particular sorts of worries. The child will know which is the most trustworthy expert worrier and problem-solver for a particular problem. For instance, one may be an expert in worrying about a sibling, or about school, or any other concern. During the night, the doll(s) work on solving the problems while the child sleeps, and whisper solutions to the child to their troubles, allowing the child to sleep. The doll takes on the burden of the worries. Some children caress the doll to help prevent it from being in pain. Each worry doll is given a night of rest every week.

Adults also use the dolls for anxiety. “Although the act of transferring your problems to a doll is imaginary, it can help you develop the healthy psychological habit of letting go of your daily preoccupations so you can get a good night’s sleep. Overthinking about things is one of the primary causes of insomnia. People go through the day but once they’re alone at night, free from all distractions, the problems take over. This is particularly true for those with plenty of unprocessed and accumulated feelings. By symbolically passing on worries to the dolls daily, it lets you learn how to cope with emotions, manage anxiety over underlying problems, and prevent insomnia in a natural way. Worry dolls can also help adults achieve some clarity when they’re formulating a solution for their problem.” (fromthemayanpeopletoyou)

The Maya sacred book, the Popol Vuh, tells the story of the Maya gods meeting to create the Mayan world. “The first men were formed of stone, but they were so hard that they could not move”; “In the second attempt they tried it with mud, but with the first rain the men fell apart.” The gods then agreed: “May they be made of corn!” And with that, Ixmucané, the goddess of

corn, emerged. She was in charge of creating Mayan men and women by grinding together all the different colors of corn—black, white, red and yellow (these colors also symbolize the human races). The sun god gave princess *Ixmucané* the gift of solving people’s problems. *Ixmucané* is known as the first woman. The worry doll represents the princess and her wisdom and helping.

Each small colorful worry doll is made of a base of wood or wire and recycled colorful textile scraps, and dressed in traditional Guatemalan Maya clothing. The colors represent particular meanings in Maya culture:

- Red: dawn, life, energy, blood, hope, fire, wisdom, east
- Yellow: corn, fertility, the heat of the sun that warms the earth and makes seeds grow, land, work, south
- White: dawn, clouds, Grandmother moon, snow, silver, air, north
- Black: sunset, rest, silence, peace, water, the origin of life, death, germination, west
- Brown: Mother Earth
- Green: mountains, hills, woods, crops
- Blue: sea, sky

Other Resources:

<https://worrydolls.app/>

Silly Billy, a children’s story about worry dolls, by Anthony Browne:

<https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/109419>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOMAb7fj62A>

<https://earlyimpactlearning.com/14-ways-to-use-worry-dolls/>