

# WORRY WARTS – THE WORRY DEPOT (CONVERGENCE THEATRE)

## 2019 SUMMERWORKS REVIEW

AUGUST 11, 2019 ILANA LUCAS

*“Do you consider yourself to be an anxious person?”*

We live, as they say, in an age of anxiety. The daily stream of fear from world news means that we not only shoulder our own burdens, but those of billions of others. [Worry Warts](#), presented by [Convergence Theatre](#) at the [2019 SummerWorks Performance Festival](#), is a short, guided tour through our personal anxieties, helmed by a troupe of sympathetic listeners.

It is an experience in two parts; the first, detailed in this review, includes a short interview and activities where you're asked about your anxieties. Next, excerpts from these interview transcripts will be used for a devised theatre performance presented six times over the course of the last weekend of the festival. The interview comes with a ticket to one of the performances on August 17th and 18th, which must be booked separately after you obtain your interview ticket. Remaining tickets will be open to the general public.

Upon entry, participants fill out a “waiver” and choose a fake name to use during the experience. Invitingly cheerful colours and cartoon frogs festoon the space, along with a free-for-all candy smorgasbord to soothe pre-rattled nerves – or, possibly, to increase anxious vibrations with the power of sugar.

After the preliminaries, primed and standing on your chosen frog spot, you see the smiling faces of the “Keepers” pop up through the windows of the Worry Depot, and upon entering, you're matched with your own personal Keeper. This Keeper will, with your permission, record your 15-minute conversation, asking you icebreakers and leading questions about your personal bugaboos as both of you sit on exercise balls. Chairs are available if your perch seems too precarious.

Fifteen minutes is not a lot of time to get into our deepest fears, but the conversation feels comprehensive nonetheless. My interviewer, Colin, was an excellent facilitator, knowing when to add commentary, when to sit back, and mostly, when to be kind. It felt more like 15 minutes of therapy than a clinical capturing of information for a future script.

The second part of the initial process is there to further the theme: a series of mindful crafts, including adding your thoughts to an affirmation wall, designing a worry monster, adding to a worry shower and a window of gratitude – all of which encourages you to further engage with your anxiety, the factors that feed it, and the factors that may work to reduce it. I particularly found myself ruminating on the concept of being the “Defensive Pessimist,” protecting oneself but also upsetting oneself by pre-emptively envisioning the worst-case scenario. The design of each area, by Anahita Dehbonehie, is candy-bright, bold, and invigorating, a kindergarten classroom for adult imaginary foes.

One thing I would say is that there are a lot of activities, and a little less than 15 minutes to complete them; this encourages rushing over mindfulness. In fact, it actually gave me some additional anxiety; my hands shook slightly as I tried to complete the linked-ring “anxiety shower” craft with enough time to visit the other stations. (I have since heard that they now allow people to stay for as long as they like.)

Despite the fact that it touched on a difficult mental space, I enjoyed my brief time at the [Worry Warts](#) depot, and not just because I was fueled by candy. It might be cliché to say, but for a few minutes, I felt seen. I’m very much looking forward to the upcoming performance based on the roiling aggregate of a week’s worth of individual fears; okay, I’m a little anxious, but I’m working on it.

*This review is a snapshot of the first performance of a work-in-progress. The production is one of several pieces at the festival presented as part of the SummerWorks Lab programming introduced in 2018. The participants in SW Lab are still in the development process and will continue to evolve throughout the festival.*

<https://www.mooneyontheatre.com/2019/08/11/worry-warts-convergence-theatre-2019-summerworks-review/>