

Stop Ruminating or "Thinking Too Much"

Hasn't everyone felt overtaken by or obsessed with repetitive thoughts after experiencing a difficult situation? We can all remember having a conflict break out with someone we know. During the following days and, too often, nights, we keep thinking about this, replaying the story over and over in our head, thinking about what we would have liked to say or do. Stressed and worried, we can think of nothing else but how to resolve things, make matters clear, and protect ourselves from possible negative consequences. Happiness experts, that is, those who do research on the means employed by happy people, recommend certain strategies to better manage this mental hyperactivity that occurs at one time or another in everyone's life

1 - Say No! Stop! That's Enough

Rumination often presents itself as a tough adversary that can resurface at any given opportunity. Even when we are engaged in an activity that requires a lot of energy or concentration, the subject of our rumination can suddenly find a way to get the upper hand. When this happens, it is important not give in to it and to override it immediately. One simple way to do this is to say to yourself or even out loud: "No, that's enough! I will stop thinking about this!"

2 - Put Off Ruminating Until Later

If our rumination must express itself, it can be helpful to grant it a specific time, for example, thirty minutes a day, or a time of day when we are generally rested and relaxed. If it surfaces outside of its scheduled time, simply remind yourself that this is not the right time and that its turn will come later. When the right time arrives, your mind will no doubt be calmer.

3 - Do a Captivating Activity

This strategy consists of finding an activity that is sufficiently all consuming that it is almost impossible to fall back into the negative thoughts. We must, therefore, channel our attention towards something that we can be engrossed in or passionate about, rather than the subject of our rumination.

4 - Develop Reassuring Thoughts

When we are dealing with intrusive and obsessive thoughts, it is possible to create a reassuring and comforting space within. For example, we can imagine that a close friend, relative, or a mentor is talking to us in order to help us manage the worry. Think about what this person might say to help, and take time throughout the day to repeat these reassuring and comforting messages.

5 - Confide in Someone

There must be people around you who you trust and whose judgment you respect. It

can be liberating to confide in one of them about the subject of your rumination as long

as they do not become directly involved in the problem or overwhelmed by repeated requests for listening. Such people are invaluable and it is important not to misuse their time and generosity.

6 – Write

Sitting down in front of a notebook or keyboard can also be a good way to unload from a surplus of emotions. A simple 5 or 10 minute writing session can really help clarify what is happening and make things less confusing. In fact, this allows for objectifying the subject of your rumination, making it external to yourself, making it more coherent, better analyzing it and, therefore, judging it based on its true extent and importance.

7 – Take Action

When we are ruminating, we are distracted from taking action. Imprisoned by our mood, we rehash the same thoughts and in doing so, we feel more sadness, worry, and suffering. Weighed down by the problem, it is possible to feel paralyzed and to keep yourself waiting for a stroke of luck or an outside intervention that will fix everything. In reality, it is better not to count too much on a miracle or the passing of time, but rather to act quickly to actually improve the situation. Even if its impact is limited, doing something will help you to feel better and be proud of yourself. After all, it may be the beginning of the solution.

8 – Stay the Course

This involves gradually developing self-confidence, but also confidence in the methods you are trying in order to help yourself. Too often, in very stressful situations, we will put a proposed method in practice, but since it does not yield immediate results, we think that it is not working and we abandon it.

We may then feel powerless and fall back into inactivity. When we try a new strategy for action, it is normal that it will not be fully effective right away. It is important to give ourselves, as well as the adopted method, a chance.

9 – Take a Wider View

Ruminating generally limits our perception of time and space. We can put things into perspective by asking ourselves what this problem will look like in a year or in several years. We can also change our view when we compare our experience to those of others who are going through equally difficult or even more difficult situations.

Conclusion

Know that rumination is part of life and that it can teach us a lot about our internal world. It generally arises as quickly as it fades. On the other hand, it can become pathological, especially for those who have experienced a traumatic event or for someone who is suffering from depression. It is therefore beneficial to access appropriate psychological support. Regardless of the situation, do not hesitate to consult with a professional from your Employee Assistance Program.

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