



Wellbeing with Fatigue

Booklet for Participants

Session 9. Worry and Rumination

steps2wellbeing
Southampton & Dorset

Action Plan

- Home Practice review
- What is Rumination?
- Targeting Unhelpful Rumination
- What is Worry?
- Challenging Worry
- Home practice

Questions?

Do you have any questions from last week's session?



Home Practice Review

How did your home practice go? Did you achieve your goals?

What did you learn from your home practice?

Rumination

Rumination – what is it?

It is a repetitive thinking pattern leading to depression, sadness, shame. It is past focused; past events, loss and personal failings. Similar to what we do in ‘problem solving’ but in overdrive! Constantly chewing things over, regurgitating. Some recent research shows that rumination is the biggest predictor of depression. Mindfulness, self-compassion and CBT strategies aiming at tackling rumination proved to be effective in challenging rumination.

Is rumination helpful?

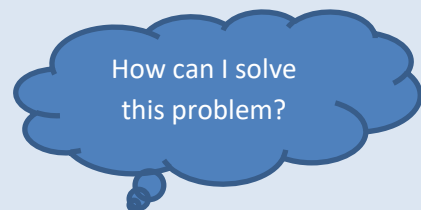
There is usually something it is hoped would be achieved from ruminating. Sometimes for example thinking about an event will help to problem solve or learn.

However, rumination can be unhelpful if:

- It is not a solution focused
- You only focus on what has gone wrong
- Excessive rumination
- It doesn't conclude in action but rather avoidance and inactivity.

Helpful rumination (reflection)

- Cognitive problem solving
- Leads to a resolution on an issue



Helpful rumination asks more “*how...?*” questions

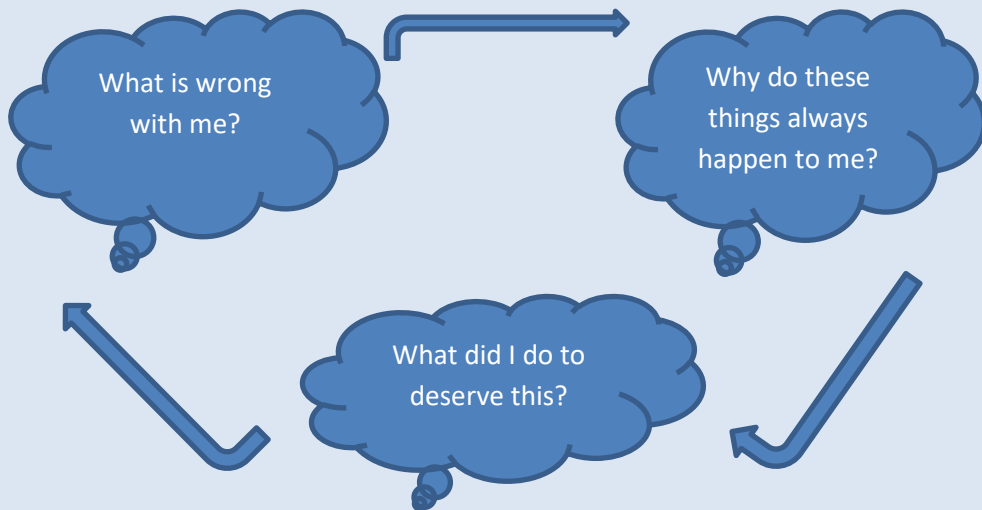
“*How...?*” Questions tend to focus on solving the problem

“*How can I solve this problem?*”

“*What can I do to make it better?*”

Unhelpful rumination

- Dwelling, brooding, chewing things over and over again
- Causes distress and leads to getting stuck in a loop



Unhelpful rumination asks more “*Why...?*” questions

“*Why...?*” questions tend to focus on the problem, its causes and consequences

“*Why am I in this situation?*”

“*What if it never gets better?*”



Targeting Unhelpful Rumination

Step 1 Self – Monitoring

- The first step in changing any habit is to become more aware of the habit and when it happens.
- The longer negative thinking continues, the worse it gets, the harder it is to stop, and becomes more automatic.
- The earlier we can spot rumination, the earlier we can stop it, and the earlier we can replace it with a different response.
- Use Rumination Diary to identify rumination and spot early warning signs.

Rumination Diary

| Date | Time | What happened just before the rumination started? | How did I feel before? | Duration | What were you thinking about? | What were the consequences – for mood and actions? | What sopped rumination? What did you try to stop? What was useful? |
|------|---------|---|------------------------|----------|---|--|--|
| 10/5 | 10 p.m. | Went to bed | Anxious Sad | 2 hrs | Why do I feel so bad? All the things I didn't do today. | Could not sleep. Felt worse | Feel asleep after taking sleeping pills. |
| 17/5 | 2 p.m. | Unsuccessful job interview | Sad | 5 hrs | I'll never get a job. What am I doing wrong? | Felt very depressed. | Phoned a friend. Felt better after talking to him. |

Step 2 Challenge Usefulness of Rumination

5 Minute Rule

- Notice that you are ruminating
- Continue ruminating for 5 minutes
- After 5 minutes ask yourself:
 - *How does ruminating affect my mood? Y/N*
 - *Is it useful to ruminate? Y/N*
 - *Does it help me to solve a problem in any way? Y/N*
 - *Have I learned anything new? Y/N*
 - *Did I come up with a solution for the problem? Y/N*



If “No” proceed to Step 3



Step 3 Choose to Challenge Rumination

- Problem solving
- Attending to environment
- Refocusing on the task at hand
- Using distraction

Problem Solving

- Define a concrete problem to be solved
- Change the questions from “Why?” to “How?”
- Generate and evaluate possible solutions
- Identify the steps to help experiment with the

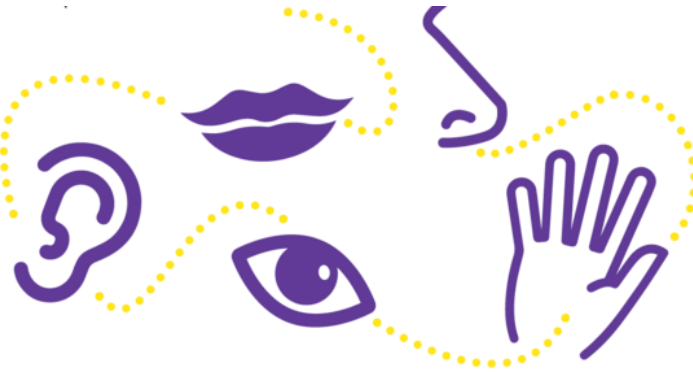
change

- Put the steps into action
- Review the results and troubleshoot



Attending closely to sensory experiences

- Direct your attention repeatedly to the sensory experience of seeing hearing, smelling, touching, or tasting in the moment.



Refocusing on the task at hand

- Identify what specific steps are needed to complete a task.
- Bring your attention back to one step at a time.



Distracting oneself from ruminative thoughts

- Direct your attention repeatedly to a focus that directs from ruminative thoughts.
- Go to another room, change an activity
- Do something active with your body or with your mind.

Take a break.
You deserve it!

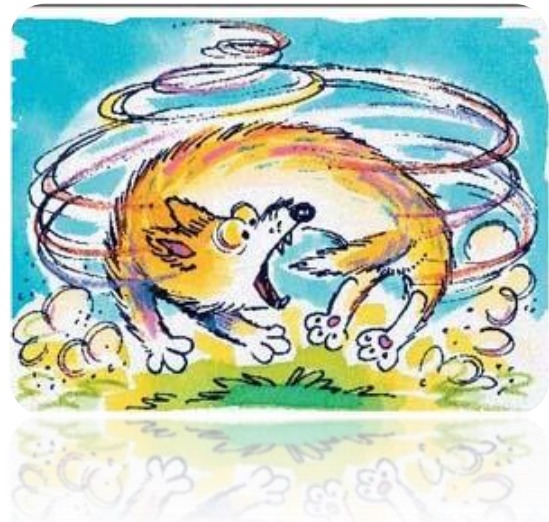


Worry

What is worry?

Worry is the process of getting caught up in anxious thinking and trying to arrive at a sense of certainty in our own mind that we have things under control and nothing will go wrong. It involves lots of “what if...” thoughts, followed by thoughts about what we can do to stop those “what if...” thoughts from coming true. It aims to make us feel less anxious by giving us more certainty that things will be okay. Unfortunately, it often has the opposite effect and we feel less certain, rather than more certain, and as such, we feel more anxious. We can feel that we are going around and around in circles, like a dog chasing its tail.

In CBT we identify to different sorts worries and understanding the difference between them is the key to breaking cycles of worry.



Practical Worries

Current, tangible situations
Problems that actually exist
What do I need to do?

Hypothetical Worries

Imagined future events that may or may not happen
What if this happens...?

Both of these sorts of worries involve feeling anxious and being motivated to act so that things are under control and we feel safe again.

The difference between the two is that **for practical worries**, anxiety motivates a problem-solving process that will usually lead to a resolution of the problem and a reduction in anxiety.

For hypothetical worries a resolution can't be found and so the anxiety and sense of not being in control is more open-ended and we locked into ongoing worry and anxiety until the situation resolves itself.

An example of a practical worry:

I have several extra bills this month and I haven't got enough money to pay them. This makes me anxious because I know that not paying my bills could have consequences. So I might engage my problem-solving skills and come up with a list of potential solutions: I could ask a family member if they can lend me some money, I could talk to my boss about doing some overtime, I could talk to my bank about getting an overdraft.

Once I've tried these solutions and found one that works, I feel that I'm back in control of my circumstances and my anxiety diminishes.



An example of a Hypothetical worry:

Imagine that I have to get to a business meeting and that the traffic is moving very slow. I have the thoughts, "What if I'm late for the meeting?", "What if people think I'm unprofessional?", "What if this damages my reputation?" As it happens, the traffic starts to move again and I get to the meeting in plenty of time.

Question: At what point would this turn into a practical worry?





Worry Management

Step 1 Worry Diary

- Keeping a worry diary is a central part of the early stages of treatment of problematic worry.
- It's a good idea to note down the day and time of the worry, so that you can see if there are any patterns there. You then need to include a short description of the worry in just a few words.
- It's then useful to record how anxious the worry made you feel
- Then begin to categorise your worries as either 'current' or 'hypothetical.'

So each of your worry diary entries might look something like this:

| Date and Time | Worry Theme | Anxiety Level 0 to 8 (<i>None to extreme</i>) | Type (<i>current problem or hypothetical situation</i>) |
|-----------------------|--|--|--|
| Tuesday 2/2 3pm | Worrying about my symptoms. What if they become worse? | 6/8 | Hypothetical |
| Tuesday 2/2 6pm | Worrying about a recent bill. How am I going to find money for it? | 4/8 | Current |

Step 2 Worry Management strategies

- Once you have begun to develop an awareness of your worry habits and can distinguish between current and hypothetical worries, the next step is to learn some basic strategies for how to manage both forms of worry.



Worry Outcome Dairy

A worry outcome diary is designed to show us that our hypothetical worries hardly ever come true, and if they occasionally do, then we cope with the situation much better than we thought we would or people are more supportive than we expected. In the long-term, this helps us to stop worrying, as we come to recognise that the “what if...?” thoughts that drive our hypothetical worry are not really worth taking seriously.

| What am I worrying about? | How much do I belie it will happen? | What actually happened? | If something did go wrong, how well did I cope? | Did my anxious thought predict what actually happened? |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|--|
| Fail driving test | 6 | I passed | n/a | no |
| Get into trouble at work | 6 | I actually got praised | n/a | no |
| | | | | |



Over to You: Choose and Practice

Summary of Session Nine

In this session we looked at two repetitive thinking habits, namely rumination and worry. We learned a number of strategies that may help us manage worry and reduce rumination.

Write down one or more key points that you have learnt today:

Suggested Home Practice

You may find useful to read this handbook, reflect upon your thoughts and the psychological techniques discussed.

Keep a rumination diary and consider using one of the strategies discussed.

Keep a worry diary to help you notice what you worry about and what kind of worries you have. Limit yourself to recording four worries a day.

Use the worry tree as a guide to how to respond to your worries or/and choose to use Worry Outcome Diary.