

Rumination

*Why did this
happen to
me?*

**If only I
had done
something
different.**

What is Rumination?

It involves focusing on one's symptoms and distress and the implications of those symptoms in a repetitive manner.

It contributes to ongoing threat perception after the experience of trauma. The tendency to ruminate and brood and to not let things go, predicts the persistence of all kinds of emotional distress, depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety, anger, guilt and shame. Replaying events by continually asking oneself and others 'why' questions for which there are no ready or acceptable answers makes stress worse.

Unhelpful Rumination can lead to inactivity and avoidance of problem-solving.

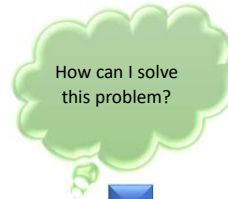
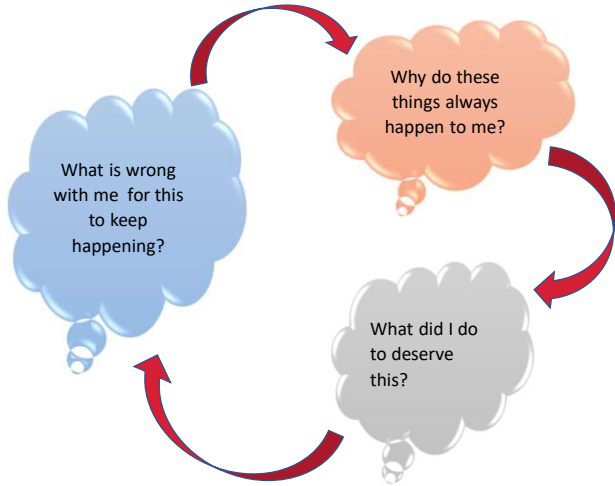
Is Rumination normal?

Yes, to some extent everyone ruminates or dwells on their problems. Thinking about our problems can be helpful: especially if we reach a solution and put it into action. Although Rumination is normal, excessive use of it can become problematic.

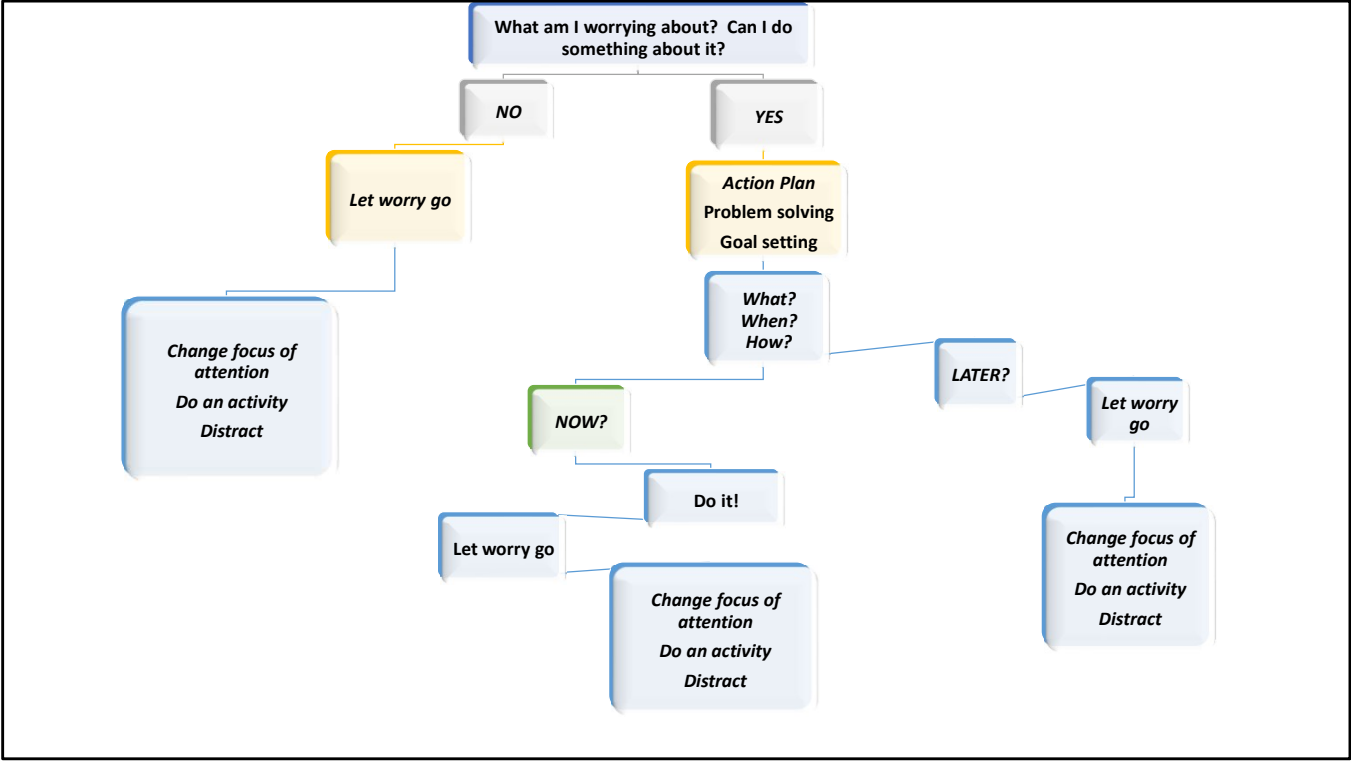
Dwelling on a problem can

Get stuck in a loop and cause distress

Lead to resolution of the issue



Take action to resolve a problem





Unhelpful rumination

- Asks more 'why...?' questions.
- Why...? Questions tend to focus on the causes and its consequences.
- 'Why am I in this situation?'
- 'What if it never gets better?'

Helpful rumination

- Asks more 'How...?' questions.
- 'How...?' questions tend to focus on solving problems.
- "How can I get out of this situation?'
- 'What can I do to make it better?'

Avoidance

Maintains anxiety disorders such as PTSD.

➤ 'Situational Avoidance' - places, people, sounds, smells, sights...

➤ 'Cognitive Avoidance' of bothersome thoughts and conversation topics



The Vicious Circle of Avoidance (After Williams *et al*, 2002b)

Avoidance

- Avoidance generates stress.
- Avoidance reduces access to social supports.
- Avoidance can be a helpful protection in the short-term.
- BUT prolonged avoidance can become a negative downward spiral.



Gradual exposure is the most effective way for the body's 'fear alert system' to be deactivated and for the mind's 'alarm system' to be switched off

<http://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-guide/behavioral-activation-guide>