

*"It seems quite clear that one cannot solve the problem with the same kind of thinking that has created the problem."*

~Berg and de Shazer

## Lesson #10: Shifting Rumination through Hope



### Topic: **Using your hope tools to change the channel.**

#### **Rumination: When we hold on to our feelings of failure or disappointment and how to stop the cycle.**

We looked at failure and now we know the reasons we fail have little to do with who we are or how smart we are, but how we go about reaching our goal. Sometimes, we hold on to the feeling of failure or disappointment. We go over and over it in our head and it interferes with our hope tools. By letting the problem replay over and over in your mind you are engaging in a process which is called "rumination."

Imagine the following scenario: You're at work/school, the day seems to be going smoothly, and you're looking forward to a relaxing evening at home. Then, with 15 minutes left, your supervisor/teacher approaches you and informs you that you have done badly on a recent test or work assignment. You apologize and try to explain what happened, but all the person tells you is that you need to get your act together.

Everyone must deal with situations like this from time to time and it would put most people in a bad mood. You have two options in how to deal with the situation:

1. Go home and spend 15 minutes problem solving about what you need to change in how you prepare/study and what you will tell your supervisor/teacher the next day, and then put it aside and enjoy the evening.
2. Let the problem eat away at you all evening and think about how unfair the world can be.

Try to guess what the hope response is.

Rumination, or dwelling repeatedly on negative thoughts about the past, can make things worse.

Basically, rumination means that you continuously think about the various aspects of situations that are upsetting. Think about what you do. When something upsets you, do you tend to mull on it, and keep going over the problem again and again? If so, then you are probably a ruminator.

Sometimes people will ruminate or have unhealthy thinking about the problem; they never even develop a solution to the problem. This is where rumination becomes a big problem.

If the situation has you in a bad mood, rumination will keep that bad mood alive, and you will feel upset for as long as you ruminate. If you ruminate on the problem for days, chances are you'll remain upset for days. Rumination is also connected to many different forms of self-sabotage. For example, if you ruminate on something upsetting a friend did, it's going to take longer to forgive that friend and get back to enjoying time spent with him or her. If you hold a grudge and constantly ruminate on what that friend did, you may lose their friendship completely.

There are many activities that can be used to distract from rumination, and the best one to use is one that works for you.

For example, some good activities include reading a book, playing a game, exercising, talking to a friend or watching a movie. Of course, you are only limited by your creativity and access to different activities. Importantly, you must enjoy what you are doing for it to work. If you hate watching a movie, you will get bored and start thinking about the problem again - so watching a movie that you don't like may not be the best choice. Rumination is a bad habit, so you will need to work on distracting activities on a regular basis if you want to break that habit.

## Hope Exercise

How did you do with Rumination? Check out the questions below and answer to the best of your ability. Once completed correctly, you will be moving on to Lesson 11!

1. By letting a problem replay over and over in your mind, you are engaging in a process called:
  - a. **Rumination**
  - b. Repetition
  - c. Contemplation
  - d. Decision-making
  
2. Rumination helps us stay hopeful.
  - a. True
  - b. **False**

3. A co-worker tells you your boss is unhappy with your performance on the latest project you completed. You can't get this out of your mind as you leave work and it is keeping you from enjoying your evening. What is the best way to distract yourself?
  - a. Find an activity you enjoy doing such as talking to a friend, watching a movie or going for a walk to help distract yourself.
  - b. Spend 15 minutes thinking about how you might handle this situation at work tomorrow and then put it aside.
  - c. Think about how angry you are at the coworker for telling you this and ruining your whole evening.
  - d. a and b
  
4. Rumination and unhealthy thinking can prevent us from finding solutions and feeling better.
  - a. True
  - b. False

## Hope Activity

Feel free to use the following activity to practice moving from unhealthy thinking patterns to what you would like to see that makes you feel more hopeful.

To better help us understand how negative thinking can affect us, hold us back and lead us to believe we have lost our HOPE, let's try the following exercise.

Use your hope tools to design a new Program. Have you ever heard the phrase, "Get your mind off of the problem?" We're going to practice changing our thought process channel and create a new Program that will help lead us back to hopeful thoughts.

- 1.) Draw on/around the picture of the first television below of a time you were upset and ruminating over something. See MY FIRST PROGRAM WORKSHEET.

Think about: Would you want to watch this same upsetting program over and over? If we could change a channel in your life, so that things were better for you, what channel would you switch to? What could you think about that would make you feel more hopeful? What hope tools are you using?

- 2.) On the second television screen, draw or create the name of your NEW program and come up with a story that will tell us what it is about. See MY NEW PROGRAM WORKSHEET AND MY PROGRAM STORY WORKSHEET.

3.) Include the following:

- What might other people see happening in your new program?
- If there was one small thing that would be different about you, what would that be? SEE WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT YOU WORKSHEET.

Remind them that they have the tools now to catch those unhelpful thoughts that cause us to ruminate and get stuck. By using their hope tools, they now can **catch them, pause them, challenge them** and then **change them**. Remember, practice make it easier and the more you practice the better you will get at achieving your goals.

## References

Berg and de Shazer, 1993, p.9. Solution-Focused Practice Tool Kit.

Tartakovsky, M. (2011). Why Ruminating is Unhealthy and How to Stop. Psych Central. Retrieved on August 23, 2017, from <https://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2011/01/20/why-ruminating-is-unhealthy-and-how-to-stop>

Chapter on rumination in Guy Winch, Ph.D. Emotional First Aid: Healing Rejection, Guilt, Failure and Other Everyday Hurts (Plume, 2014)