

"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.**

Teacher Notes

Materials

Markers

Pens

Hand out of the television outline and story page

Step by Step teaching guide

Pre-questions

Last week, 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 them 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: Julie is at school, the day seems to be going smoothly, and Julie is looking forward to a relaxing evening at home. Then, with 15 minutes left, Julie's teacher approaches her and informs her that she have done badly on the test. Julie apologizes and tries to explain what happened, but all her teacher tells her is that she needs to get her act together.

Everyone has to deal with situations like this from time to time and it would put most people in a bad mood. Julie has two options in how to deal with the situation, try to guess what the hope response is:

1. Go home and spend 15 minutes problem solving about what she needs to change in how she studies and what she will tell the teacher the next day, and then put it aside and enjoy the evening.

2. Let the problem eat away at her all evening and think about how unfair the world 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 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 keeps that bad mood alive, and you 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.

The key to if you are upset, is to notice your feelings. Accept your feelings and what they are telling you. And then take positive action to change the situation.

In rumination, what you do is go over and over the feelings without feeling how the situation made you feel, and letting them go.

If you are having a tough time getting the thoughts stopped from cycling, even after you've acknowledged your feelings and come up with a positive solution, there are healthy behaviors that can take you off the thoughts and rumination. The key is to do something positive and healthy for your brain, and not destructive, and you will need to find the 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 have to 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. If you talk to a friend you can talk about your feelings, and positive actions, yet you want to be sure you aren't talking poorly about others or cycling the problem over again and again. You want to focus on solutions, not rumination. Rumination is a bad habit, so you will need to work on positive replacement activities on a regular basis if you want to break that habit.

Lesson Steps

To help us understand how negative thinking can affect us and hold us back and lead us to believe we have lost our HOPE,

Let's see if we can use your hope tools to design a new program. Have you ever heard the phrase, "get your mind off the problem?" We're going to change the channel and create a new program.

1. Ask the child to draw on/around the picture of the television 1. Or, children can be encouraged to draw their own screen. (See example at bottom of page.) Now draw a picture of something you recently ruminated about. Something you thought about over and over and over.

Teacher Prompt: This image can be anything. If you were ruminating about fighting with a friend, draw what that looks like to you. Perhaps it is a bad grade? Or maybe you didn't do well on your latest sports game. And it doesn't have to be a great work of art, as for many drawing isn't our strength. Use a symbol or whatever works for you.

2. Now let's draw something on television 2. How would you change that picture into something positive? Draw an image or symbol that represents an action you could take to change the channel. If you turn that rumination into something positive to replace it, what would it be?

Teacher Prompt: If it was a fight with the friend, perhaps they draw themselves visualizing a positive outcome with their friend. If it is a bad grade, perhaps they draw a strategy from the failure lesson on how to improve the process to getting a good grade for the next test.

3. Now look at both TVs. If you had to go home from school today and pick one of those shows to watch, which one would you choose? What do you think is better for your brain? What is going to lead to a better outcome next time?

Teacher Prompt: When you ruminate, that is exactly what you do! You watch the same bad show, over and over again. Now why would we do that to ourselves? The exciting part – you don't have to! You can choose what you watch! Each and every day, in every moment, you can choose what TV you watch (i.e. think about) with your thoughts. So if you notice yourself ruminating about something over and over, you now have tools and skills to help you acknowledge your feelings, and then shift yourself into a better and more hopeful place to change the channel of your life.

Teacher Prompt: Give children time to work on their project and leave time for discussion. Invite them to share what they have learned during this exercise. Reinforce the message about the upstairs and downstairs brain. Ask what tools they are using most in changing their channel and creating their new program.

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)

CHANGING THE CHANNEL

Rumination Channel:



Hopeful Channel

