

I Can't Stop Thinking About It

MANY PEOPLE WITH ADHD express frustration with the frequency and depth of negative and intrusive thoughts. These thoughts can be painful, and they may grow and grow until they affect daily life. Dwelling on such thoughts increases anxiety, depression, and restlessness—often causing you to make poor choices, incorrectly read the room, misinterpret social cues, and become oblivious to your surroundings. Anxiety makes you more internally focused, which can lead to rejection sensitivity. How can you manage those intense, negative thoughts?

Prevent rumination with five daily strategies

1. Ask yourself, “Am I ruminating?”

The gear shift of the brain, the cingulate gyrus, may be stuck. This gear shift helps you shift from thought to thought, transition between activities, or move away from being stuck. Some people are prone to have an overactive cingulate gyrus and therefore tend toward rumination. When you ruminate, do you notice you continue in this loop and nothing seems to break it? Ask yourself, “Am I ruminating?” “Am I stuck?” Engage in a body scan and



check in with yourself. Take your own emotional temperature to see what you are feeling in your body and mind.

2. *Re-evaluate your inner story.*

Could it be that you didn't fully understand the comment, intention, or act about which you are ruminating? Double-check your reasoning by asking yourself these questions: "What is the story you are telling yourself? What evidence is there that this story is true? What else could it be?" Now, create a neutral thought to replace your negative thought. Instead of thinking, "They did not return my text because I was too outspoken at that meeting," consider that "They might be busy, it is a hectic time of year," or "I have no evidence that Jane was offended by how I behaved at the meeting."

3. *Use "what" not "why" questions.*

When we ruminate, we often go to why questions such as, "Why did my boss look the other way?" "Why didn't my friend respond to my text?" Research shows that why questions are ineffective because we are asking why without the data from other people. Without your boss, your friend, or other information, you cannot solve the why. The ruminative loop keeps people turned inward rather than looking outward to read and interpret the situations.

4. *Create prearranged strategies.*

Alter your physical circumstances with a "pattern interrupt." Modify your thoughts with prearranged strategies intended to halt the negative ruminative cycle. This may be changing your environment, listening to music, engaging in physical activity, practicing mindfulness, or seeking out a pleasurable activity. By flooding your brain with positive chemicals such as oxytocin, you make it more difficult for negative thinking to take the main stage.

5. *Prevent and prepare for rumination.*

Develop everyday strategies to keep your thinking brain in charge and your primitive brain in the back seat. When we ruminate, intrusive thoughts and worry can send us into fight, flight, or freeze mode. The more you intervene with a strategy when the reaction starts, the more you can fend off the runaway reaction cycle. Research shows daily exercise, time in nature, shaping your environment, engaging in daily mindfulness or yoga, practicing breathing by breathing in and out ten times can all help you reduce rumination. **A**

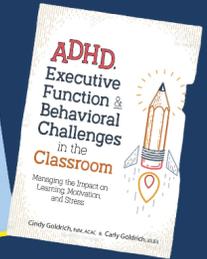
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