

Stop Rumination

There is a simple technique useful in taming persistent troubling thoughts (i.e., engaging rumination). There are times when you have been treated unfairly, taken advantage of, slighted, and unfairly accused of doing something bad. When you feel that way and you excessively persist in thinking about it, it is usually unproductive, and the rumination often sustains and even strengthens the negativity. Often, it is not problem-solving, but merely rumination (often something like self-inflicted wounds).

When rumination is taking far too much of your time and producing stress, it is obviously a time to stop ruminating. However, rumination can persist in an almost routine way. Imagining revenge might be gratifying but is probably not a healthy way to deal with rumination (and actually engaging revenge might lead to asocial behavior which can be troubling and leading to more thoughts of being treated unfairly). Persisting rumination can even develop into depression and become a part of a depressive episode. It is better to use your imagination in a constructive way.

There is a simple technique useful in controlling rumination. When rumination is making things worse, it is surely time to take control of the situation. You command yourself to stop. You do this in an effective way. You take a deep breath and as you exhale you swipe your forehead, side to side with an open hand, and shout STOP! (if with others, imagine a forceful shout) and then make the movement of throwing the bad thoughts in the trash. Or better yet, imagine throwing the rumination into the garbage disposal and imagine grinding and washing away the reoccurring thoughts. Then walk away (maybe even dance away) and think nice thoughts.

Repeat if necessary (yes, can be a one-time event). You will be surprised at how effective the simple technique is. When there is some relief from the negative thoughts think of something nice thereby strengthening the better outcome.