

## Banish stress and anxiety

Research shows those who ruminate are more prone to stress and anxiety, and less equipped to cope with or bounce back from the challenges of everyday work and life.

Rumination is the tendency to churn over emotional upsets. It involves repetitive and passive thoughts focused on the causes and effects of your distress. It is excessive thinking and catastrophising about past events and future scenarios, replaying negative thoughts over and over that spiral out of control and leave you emotionally drained. You lose perspective and get lost as things balloon out of proportion. Consumed with fear and worry, you find it hard to sleep and concentrate.

All this does not lead to coping mechanisms or problem-solving strategies that work for you. While all of us are prone to some rumination from time to time, it can magnify stress to the point that it creates debilitating effects on the mind and body, compromising well-being and happiness. While it may seem that solving the immediate problem will resolve the stress, continuing to ruminate about it does not lead to any lasting resolution.

### Four mental habits to help interrupt ruminating

Developing these habits will curb excessive thinking, alleviate your stress and enhance your well-being.



HT Muhammad Usman

> 1. *Become aware*: Pay attention to your thinking. Unconscious, disturbing thoughts played over and over in your head like a broken record are where stress is generated. Ask yourself 'What am I thinking?'. Become the silent witness of your thoughts. Don't judge them good or bad, simply be aware. This alone can interrupt the unhealthy pattern of ruminating. This is the first and foundational habit.

> 2. *Refocus your attention*. Practise mindfulness focusing on what you are doing in the here and now. Don't allow yourself to drift into worrying about the past or the future, only the present matters. You may feel stressed about your lack of control over situations. But the one thing over which you always have control is where you put your attention. Put your attention where you want it to be – and hold it there.

> 3. *Detach yourself*. Detached concern is wisdom. It enables you to maintain perspective and objectivity. To not take the situation too seriously. Consciously put an appropriate distance (physically, mentally, and emotionally) between yourself and the stressful situation. At all times, distinguish between worrying, which is negative, and caring which is positive.

> 4. *Let go*. To let go means to move on. To fully accept and be at peace with what is. To no longer allow the situation to have any impact you. What is done is done. It is in the past and no amount of thinking or ruminating or wishing or blaming will change it. Letting go is to come to terms with this. The future is undetermined, is in your imagination and beyond your control.

### Conclusion

Worry is a bad habit. It pretends to be necessary but serves no useful purpose. –Eckhart Tolle

### More on this topic

- ✓ [Resilience That Works: Eight Practices for Leadership and Life](#) by Marian N Ruderman and others
- ✓ [Banish Stress and Stop Ruminating](#) from the Center for Creative Leadership