

Rumination Exit Worksheet

Rumination can feel productive while repeatedly circling the same question. This sheet helps you check whether thinking is still producing information - and choose an exit when it is not.

Ask: "What do I know now that I did not know 10 minutes ago?"

COMPLETED EXAMPLE

The loop

What question, conversation, mistake, or future scenario keeps replaying?

At dinner I interrupted a friend and made a joke that landed awkwardly. Since getting home I keep replaying it and asking whether I sounded rude.

What has this thinking produced?

New facts? A decision? A useful action? A clearer question?

No new facts. I have replayed the same few seconds and feel more embarrassed than I did earlier.

What is it trying to give me?

Certainty, reassurance, an explanation, control, self-punishment, prevention?

Certainty that my friend is not offended and reassurance that I did not make a bad impression.

10-minute test

What do I know now that I did not know 10 minutes ago? If the answer is "nothing," the loop may no longer be solving the problem.

I know the same things I knew ten minutes ago. The loop is not producing an answer because I cannot know exactly what my friend thought.

Choose an exit:

- ☒ Take one concrete action
- ☐ Get one piece of needed information
- ☐ Schedule a specific time to revisit it
- ☐ Let the question remain unanswered for now
- ☒ Shift attention to a chosen activity

My exit plan

What will I do for the next 10-20 minutes instead of continuing the loop?

Write down one useful option: if I am still concerned tomorrow, I can send a simple check-in. For tonight, put my phone down and finish the book I was reading.

If the thought returns

Write one sentence you can use without reopening the whole debate. Example: "I have already thought about this; I will return to it at 6 pm if needed."

Remind myself: ?I already reviewed this. There is no new information right now. I can revisit it tomorrow if there is a real reason to.?