

Recognising Unhelpful Thinking -Thought Stopping and Rumination

What are thought stopping and rumination?

- ➔ Thought stopping is when you try not to think about your extreme and unhelpful thoughts.
- ➔ Rumination is when you think too much about your extreme and unhelpful thoughts – when you go over and over them in your mind and dwell on every detail, or brood on your mistakes or doubts.

Neither of these techniques is useful in getting rid of unhelpful thoughts – in fact, they can both make things worse.

You may have found that trying hard not to think about your unhelpful thoughts actually made them worse – and the harder you try not to think about them, the more attention you are giving them. Thoughts feed on the attention you give them, so if you give your unhelpful thoughts less attention they will starve and might even die away altogether.

On the other hand, if you try to think your way out of your unhelpful thoughts by going over every detail, you may find that the same spiral of thoughts goes round and round in your mind and you can't get away from it. This isn't helpful either – it's better just to let the thoughts be. Don't get caught up in them – just accept that you have these worries and that you can't think your way through them or stop them. You may even find that brooding on your worries can make them seem worse than they really are.

How can your guide help?

Your guide can help you work out whether either of these thinking styles applies to you. You might need to keep a diary over the next few days to see how you are dealing with your unhelpful thoughts. You could also write down what effect your thoughts had on your moods, feelings and behaviour, using a 'Five Areas' diagram.

- Thoughts aren't facts, however true they seem to be.
- Thoughts can be changed, or just left alone to wither and die.
- Not all unhelpful thoughts have to be changed before you start to feel better.
- Some thoughts are easier to change than others.
- Just because the old thoughts are still around, it doesn't mean you have to pay attention to them or do anything about them – just let them be.