

When Thinking Stops Helping

Your brain often ruminates because it believes that if it thinks long enough, it can prevent future pain, make sense of the past, or finally find certainty.

1. Is my brain...

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Solving? | ☐ Replaying? |
| ☐ Learning? | ☐ Judging? |
| ☐ Preparing? | ☐ Searching for certainty? |

2. How do I know I'm ruminating?

My brain is saying...	What I notice...
I just need to think about it a little more.	I've thought about this many times already.
I have to figure this out before I can relax.	I'm waiting for certainty.
Why did I do that?	I'm replaying the past instead of learning from it.
What if...?	I'm trying to predict every possible outcome.
I can't let this go.	My attention keeps returning to the same place.
I should have...	I'm rewriting something I can't change.

3. What is my brain hoping to get by thinking about this?

Maybe it's trying to...

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ☐ Feel prepared | ☐ Feel in control | ☐ Get someone else's approval |
| ☐ Prevent mistakes | ☐ Be fair to myself | ☐ Make sense of what happened |
| ☐ Find certainty | ☐ Avoid painful emotions | ☐ Other: _____ |

4. Has anything changed?

Problem I'm thinking about: _____

Since I started thinking about it...

- ☐ I have new information
☐ I made a decision
☐ I took an action
☐ Nothing has changed

**If nothing has changed, my brain may be repeating, not solving.*

5. What does this moment actually need?

If...	Try...
I need information	Gather facts
I need a decision	Set a time limit and choose
I need to process emotions	Allow the feelings instead of solving them
Nothing can be solved right now	Return to the present moment
I'm avoiding uncertainty	Practice tolerating not knowing