

January 2021 Issue: Week Two

It Matters What You Think

Complete this month's lead-o-meter.

Last week in ReCharge, we introduced the topic of rumination. When we ruminate, we are repetitively thinking about a thought or problem without reaching a resolution. When left unchecked, rumination can use up a lot of your brain's energy, and over time can significantly impact your mental health.

Did you know? *The chemistry in your brain and body can be triggered by your very own thoughts!* When we have negative thoughts, our brain and nervous system believe the thoughts are real and imminent and will react as if you are under attack.

In response to the negative thoughts, the brain will produce a little shot of **cortisol** into our system — the same chemical that starts up our *Fight or Flight* system.

When our body is in this mode, it deactivates the part of our brain that is in charge of empathy, compassion, forgiveness, and executive thinking. It then redirects that energy and activates our '*lizard brain*' (the limbic system), which physically prepares us for *Fight or Flight mode*.

Monthly Breakdown

Week 1

The 'Where': Lead-o-meter

Week 2

The 'What': Self-Assessment Exercise

Week 3

The 'Why': Research, Science and Information

Week 4

The 'How': Building up your skill

Can you imagine the long-term impact of continuous, ruminating negative thoughts? It would be comparable to regular cortisol shots into your brain!



On the flip side, thinking positively also triggers chemicals — releasing a shot of dopamine. **Dopamine** has the opposite effect of cortisol. It gives us feelings of peace, contentment and redirects the blood flow to our brain's pre-frontal cortex. Aside from producing pleasant feelings, this activates the higher parts of our brain involved in resolving problems and conflicts, as well as showing compassion and empathy.

Isn't it amazing that we have the ability to trigger chemicals through our thoughts? Now you can choose which chemical you prefer — cortisol or dopamine — then adjust your thoughts accordingly!

If you struggle with rumination, you are not alone. While the solution may look different

for every individual, finding a way to halt repetitive negative thinking will help us direct our brain resources to more positive endeavours.

In order to make that positive change, we need to identify what emotion or belief is at the centre of our rumination and what factors help to keep this emotion or belief circulating. Once we have identified these factors, we can start to make changes to stop the rumination and any potential harm to our mental and emotional health.

Using the imagery of cogs in a machine, we can see how the smaller cogs keep the large central cog turning. If a problem arises with the cogs causing the small cogs to stop,

then the whole mechanism starts to grind to a halt.

Refer to the self-assessment exercise below.

We can use this same line of thinking to help us deal with the thoughts and behaviours that keep our rumination habit going. For example, if the emotion at the core of our rumination is **ANGER**, we will write 'anger' inside the large central cog. We can then identify each factor that allows or helps our anger to continue. The goal is to reduce — and ideally eliminate — our anger by making targeted and helpful changes in each of the smaller cogs.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What keeps your rumination cog turning?

[Click here to download the self-assessment worksheet!](#)

In the central cog, write down the emotion or belief you think is at the core of your rumination. To determine this, think about the subject, person, challenge, or environment that often produces negative feelings for you.

Now think about your thought patterns, behaviours, and even physical reactions that keep your central cog turning and write these in the smaller cogs. If there are not enough cogs, draw a few more.

EXAMPLE





Interested in learning more?

Watch this 8 minute video: *"What Negative Thinking Can Do To Your Mind"*

Next week, we will look further into the impact of rumination on our health and how we can start to turn the cogs in a positive, healthy direction!

Photo by Bill Oxford - unsplash.com

LEAD-O-METER: Are you a 'ruminator'?

Please take 30 seconds to complete this month's short self-awareness questionnaire. Follow the link below or scan the QR code by opening your phone camera and pointing at the code.

**Complete the January
Lead-o-meter!**

We'll share the anonymous results at the end of the month!



How did you like this issue of ReCharge?

We welcome and appreciate your feedback and suggestions! [Fill out our feedback form](#) or contact [Rochelle Morandini](#).



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