Stop rumination from ruining your day

Do you focus on the causes and consequences of your distress, as opposed to its solutions? Focusing on bad feelings and experiences from the past is called rumination and can be a barrier to your present and future success. So, how do you stop it?

That's what one reader asked recently on the Admin Pro Forum:

"I have trouble compartmentalizing things when they go wrong. For example, if I mess up at work, or have a problem with a co-worker, my day is ruined. How do I not get stuck in the negative moments on the job?" — Tracie, benefits assistant

We spoke to some experts to find out. Performing a quick self-assessment is a great way to gain awareness and disrupt the cycle, says communications coach Kealah Parkinson. "Answer three basic questions: What does my body feel? What are my moods? What are my thoughts?" suggests Parkinson.

Immediately apply action tools to what you observe about yourself, says Parkinson. "Use an affirmation statement to shift your thoughts into a positive realm or change your perspective by going for a walk or taking a bathroom break."

If the thoughts keep popping up, get them out of your head by writing them down, suggests corporate psychologist Dave Popple. "Ruminating is the brain's way of telling you that there's something wrong. Convince your brain that you will deal with the issue and follow through by writing down your thoughts and scheduling a set time to address the issues. Once the brain is convinced that you will follow through on addressing the issues, the unwanted thoughts and ruminations will decrease significantly."

If you continue to struggle, reach out to those who support you, suggests Jennifer Sewell, vice president of clinical and quality services with LifeWorks at Ceridian. "They may give you a fresh perspective on what happened. Be specific and let people know what would help most."

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