

When your child is preoccupied with negative thoughts, they may experience a form of rumination—a tendency toward dwelling on past failures and/or goals that have not yet been attained. While it generally occurs because of your child's hope that they can get to the bottom of something, these thoughts can become repetitive and interfere with their ability to focus on problem-solving. **Here's 10 tips for shutting down rumination and getting back on track:**

1. **Watch for warning signs.** Look for telltale clues that rumination is visiting (feelings of distress, a case of “whys,” etc). If you can see it coming, you may be able to let your child know and make a conscious decision together to implement a new response.
2. **Identify the thought or fear.** Help your child put words to their thoughts and examine what feeling lies beneath it all. This will help her use her words to explain her experience again in the future.
3. **Worst-case scenario.** Instruct your child to answer two questions:
 - What's the worst that can happen?
 - Can I handle that?

Usually, a child will be able to say that, even if things go very wrong, they could, ultimately, handle the situation.

4. **Assess what's controllable.** Getting stuck on a situation that is completely outside of one's control won't help, that's for sure. Do a reality check with your child. Is anything within their control in this instance? If not, what *do* they have control over?
5. **Schedule a worry break.** Offer a time-limited space for worries reserved at a specific time of day. If you notice your child ruminating outside of their scheduled time, gently redirect them to save it for worry time.
6. **Mindfulness.** Get out of the past and future and get into the present. Breathing exercises are one form of mindfulness that can help both proactively *and* in response to rumination.
7. **Don't Think. Do.** Have your child repeatedly say to herself, “don't think” and find an activity to do instead.
8. **Distract.** Very simply, find other things to do. What activities seem to bring your child joy or help them ward off distress? Redirect toward more preferred coping skills and help them get started.
9. **Create a mantra.** A positive affirmation, a mantra, or a prayer can be supremely effective at replacing negative thoughts.
10. **Visualize.** Ask your child to identify an experience when she was totally immersed or focused—something that took over her senses or helped her feel completely in her element. Now, instruct your child to recreate that experience in her mind.

