Ruminating Thought Worksheet
What to Do when Thoughts are Unhelpful

Ruminating Thought: __________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
When did I start thinking that? (date and time) ____________________________________
How long did it last? __________________________________________________________
What was I doing while I started thinking that? __________________________________
How engaged was I with what I was doing? _____________________________________
What were the consequences of thinking about that? ______________________________
What might be the function (or purpose) of thinking about that? ___________________

Stop the Ruminating:

Option A: Practice with “attention to experience” strategies.
What colors, smells, noises, sights, & sensations do I see, smell, hear or physically feel?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
What are the steps of my task that I need to do right now (i.e. parenting, work)
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Option B: Select activities that will need my full attention
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Sample Ruminating Thought Worksheet
What to Do when Thoughts are Unhelpful
Ruminating Thought: “I was depressed all day yesterday because I was thinking about how my sister really doesn’t love me.”

When did I start thinking that? (date and time) About 10am yesterday when I was lying in bed.

How long did it last? All day until my sleeping med kicked in around 11pm.

What was I doing while I started thinking that? Lying in bed watching TV.

How engaged was I with what I was doing? Not very.

What were the consequences of thinking about that? I felt too bad about myself to make lunch for myself or get dressed and then my blood sugar got bad and I felt sick. I am now really anxious about seeing my sister, so now I’m thinking about skipping out on my niece’s school play tonight.

What might be the function (or purpose) of thinking about that? The longer I think about it, the more likely that I won’t be able to go to the play...which means that I get to avoid my sister. That might be good, but that means that I then don’t support my niece.

Stop the Ruminating:

Option A: Practice with “attention to experience” strategies.

What colors, smells, noises, sights, & sensations do I see, smell, hear or physically feel?

I see the yellow flowers on the wall paper. I feel my butt on the chair. I feel my toes pinching on my shoes. I smell someone’s tunafish sandwhich. I see that I really need to water my rubber tree plant.

What are the steps of my task that I need to do right now (i.e. parenting, work)

I need to 1) Take a Shower, 2) Get dressed, 3) put on make-up, 4) buy flowers for my niece & a card. Even if I decide not to see the play to avoid running into my sister, I can still leave her flowers and a card - and I can call a friend and go out for coffee.

Option B: Select activities that will need my full attention

I could....babysit for my neighbor’s 2 year old. He needs a LOT of attention, and she’s always grateful for it. I could...call some friends to play 3-on-3 basketball. I could...volunteer with Habitat for Humanity. If I ruminate there, I’ll wind up with a nail through my thumb. I could...go to the Humane shelter and work with the dogs and cats. I could...serve a meal at the homeless shelter. I could...take the kids to the park and play tag with them.