

# life lines

Information for your life

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## TIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

People who live green at home are likely to practice similar habits at work. Incorporating sustainability into your lifestyle means becoming aware of the impact of your choices in food, products, and energy use. Focus on the small steps you can take at home, at work, and in your community. You can start by calculating your environmental footprint

([www.footprintcalculator.org/home/en](http://www.footprintcalculator.org/home/en)).

### **Do your part to live smart.**

According to the World Health Organization, 13 million deaths annually and nearly a quarter of all disease worldwide—including 33 percent of illnesses in children under age five—are due to environmental causes that could be avoided or prevented. Doing your part to take care of the environment helps you protect yourself and others from the climate's effects on health. Health issues such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cardiovascular disease, and

stroke can be aggravated by an unhealthy environment. Here are a few actions you can take to do your part to live smart.

### **Make sustainable food choices.**

Production, processing, packaging, and transportation of food is highly dependent on the use of fossil fuels and chemical fertilizers. These can greatly harm human health and the health of the environment. As a consumer, you have power to make a difference by considering the impact of your choices. Opting for local, healthy, environmentally responsible food helps promote both personal health and the overall health of the community.

Sustainable food systems operate in a cycle of sustainable production and support. Farmers can make their food more sustainable by limiting pesticide use and treating their animals humanely and responsibly.

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## TIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

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Consumers can select food produced close to home and reduce the impact of today's food system on the environment by lessening the distance food travels from farm to table.

Choose foods that

- Do not harm the environment
- Support and preserve rural communities
- Are healthy and nutritious
- Respect farm animals
- Provide farmers with fair wages
- Are free of added toxins
- Are grown locally
- Do not harm the health of farm workers

**Use alternative transportation.**

Pollutants released by vehicles greatly increase air pollution levels and have been linked to adverse health effects, including premature mortality, cardiac symptoms, exacerbation of asthma symptoms, and diminished lung function. To minimize the damaging impact of our current transportation choices, try adopting more sustainable methods of travel.

Consider using the alternative commute options featured below, as well as onsite electric vehicle charging programs to shift to sustainable transportation. Alternative commute options include

- Walking and bicycling
- Public transportation
- Carpools and vanpools
- Telework and alternate work schedules

**Make green updates at home.**

Sustainable homes are not only better for the planet but offer opportunity for great cost savings. Here are some tips for saving energy:

- Make sure your home is well-insulated to conserve energy and spend less on heat and air conditioning.
- Use a programmable thermostat to time your heat and air conditioning for when you are in your home. These can shut off while you are away, saving both energy and money.
- Weatherproof your home. Caulk, seal, or weather-strip outside openings to prevent air leaks.

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## TIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

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- Conserve water by installing aerating and low-flow faucets and showerheads. Choose garden plants that don't have a high demand for water.
- If you are looking for a major upgrade, tankless and on-demand water heaters can save up to 30 percent of energy compared to standard natural gas tank heaters.

### **Purchase green products.**

There are many stages in a product's life cycle, and each one can negatively affect the environment. Before making a purchase, consider the full impact of the product's material, manufacturing method, and usage.

To convert raw (or recycled) materials into a product, elements are processed, shaped, and manipulated. These steps consume energy and deplete nonrenewable natural resources. For example, plastic products are made from petroleum, a finite resource.

Transportation of products (including food) using fuel-burning vehicles releases carbon emissions and contributes to particle pollution. This lessens air quality and can impact personal health.

Additionally, many products affect the environment throughout their useful life. Using these items responsibly can reduce their environmental impact.

Any equipment with a plug requires electricity to operate. To prevent wasting energy, turn equipment off when not in use.

At the end of a product's useful life, consider what parts may be reused and how to dispose of the product or its components responsibly. Plastics, glass, paper, and other materials may be recycled. Many manufacturers will take products at the end of their lifecycle. Check with vendors in your area for specifics on disposal practices.

### **Green Purchase Checklist**

A good indication that an item is green is if it

- Contains 30 percent or greater post-consumer recycled content (paper)
- Is made of biobased content
- Is environmentally preferable, energy efficient, and/or water efficient
- Has minimal lifecycle costs
- Has minimal risk of toxic/hazardous chemicals
- Is durable or has a long product life
- Is necessary

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## TIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

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### Recycle electronics.

Electronics impact the environment and human health. Fabricating and shipping electronics use water and energy, and often create industrial waste. The disposal of electronics results in a massive amount of waste going into landfills. Toxins commonly found in electronics can leak into the soil or release into the air through burning.

To prevent toxic leakage from electronics, look for e-waste recycling programs in your community. Specialized centers can safely dispose of these products and may be able to recycle some of the material. Many manufacturers will also take old products to recycle their parts.

Only through management over the entire lifecycle of electronics can people mitigate the negative effects on soil, water, air, and health. Check for special programs in your area to recycle

- Batteries
- Old laptops or phones
- Printers, keyboards, and other computer accessories
- Televisions
- Wires and plugs

### Related Links

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Individual Greenhouse Gas Emissions Calculator, <https://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/test/climatechange/ghgemissions/individual.html>
- Ecological Footprint Calculator, [www.footprintcalculator.org/home/en](http://www.footprintcalculator.org/home/en)
- Home Energy Saver, <http://hes.lbl.gov/consumer>

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# SLEEP DISORDERS



## What is sleep?

Sleep is a complex biological process. While you are sleeping, you are unconscious, but your brain and body functions are still active. They are doing a number of important jobs that help you stay healthy and function at your best. So, when you don't get enough quality sleep, it does more than just make you feel tired. It can affect your physical and mental health, thinking, and daily functioning.

## What are sleep disorders?

*Sleep disorders* are conditions that disturb your normal sleep patterns. There are more than 80 different sleep disorders. Some major types include

- **Insomnia**—being unable to fall asleep and stay asleep (This is the most common sleep disorder.)
- **Sleep apnea**—a breathing disorder in which you stop breathing for 10 seconds or more during sleep
- **Restless leg syndrome (RLS)**—a tingling or prickly sensation in your legs, along with a powerful urge to move them
- **Hypersomnia**—being unable to stay awake during the day (This includes *narcolepsy*, which causes extreme daytime sleepiness.)
- **Circadian rhythm disorders**—problems with the sleep-wake cycle; they make you unable to sleep and wake at the right times
- **Parasomnia**—acting in unusual ways while falling asleep, sleeping, or waking from sleep, such as walking, talking, or eating

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Some people who feel tired during the day have a true sleep disorder. For others, the real problem is not allowing enough time for sleep. It's important to get enough sleep every night. The amount of sleep you need depends on several factors, including your age, lifestyle, health, and whether you have been getting enough sleep recently. Most adults need about seven to eight hours each night.

### What causes sleep disorders?

There are different causes for different sleep disorders, including

- Other conditions, such as heart disease, lung disease, nerve disorders, and pain
- Mental illnesses, including depression and anxiety
- Medicines
- Genetics

Sometimes the cause is unknown.

There are also some factors that can contribute to sleep problems, including caffeine and alcohol; an irregular schedule, such as working the night shift; and aging. As people age, they often get less sleep or spend less time in the deep, restful stage of sleep. They are also more easily awakened.

### What are the symptoms of sleep disorders?

The symptoms of sleep disorders depend on the specific disorder. Some signs that you may have a sleep disorder include these:

- You regularly take more than 30 minutes each night to fall asleep.
- You regularly wake up several times each night and then have trouble falling back to sleep, or you wake up too early in the morning.
- You often feel sleepy during the day, take frequent naps, or fall asleep at the wrong times during the day.
- Your bed partner says that when you sleep, you snore loudly, snort, gasp, make choking sounds, or stop breathing for short periods.
- You have creeping, tingling, or crawling feelings in your legs or arms that are relieved by moving or massaging them, especially in the evening and when trying to fall asleep.
- Your bed partner notices that your legs or arms jerk often during sleep.

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- You have vivid, dreamlike experiences while falling asleep or dozing.
- You have episodes of sudden muscle weakness when you are angry or fearful, or when you laugh.
- You feel as though you cannot move when you first wake up.

## How are sleep disorders diagnosed?

To make a diagnosis, your health care provider will use your medical history, your sleep history, and a physical exam. You may also have a sleep study (*polysomnogram*). The most common types of sleep studies monitor and record data about your body during a full night of sleep. The data includes

- Brain wave changes
- Eye movements
- Breathing rate
- Blood pressure
- Heart rate and electrical activity of the heart and other muscles

Other types of sleep studies may check how quickly you fall asleep during daytime naps or whether you are able to stay awake and alert during the day.

## What are the treatments for sleep disorders?

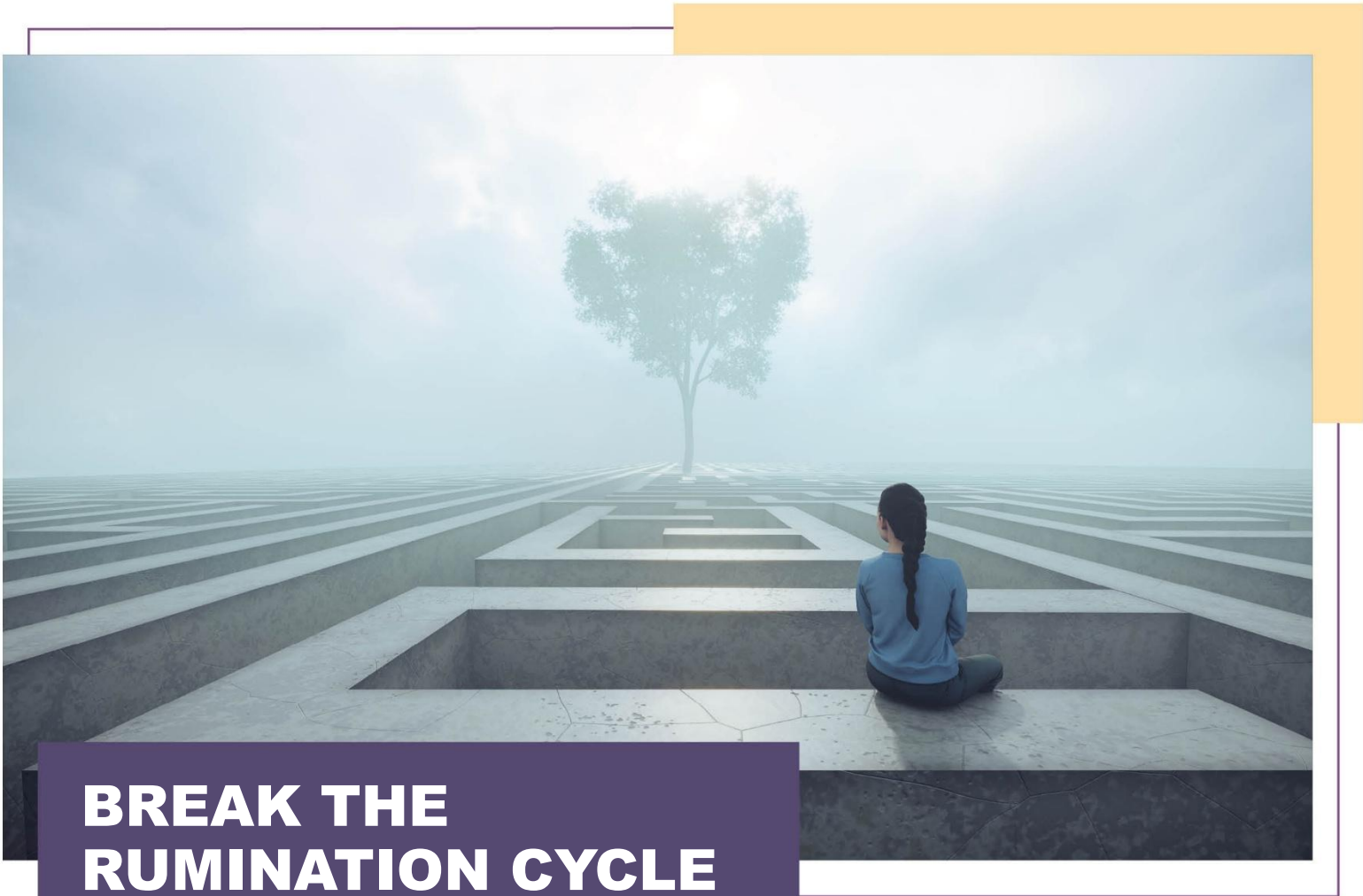
Treatments for sleep disorders depend on which disorder you have. They may include

- Good sleep habits and other lifestyle changes, such as a healthy diet and exercise
- Cognitive-behavioral therapy or relaxation techniques to reduce anxiety about getting enough sleep
- CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine for sleep apnea
- Bright-light therapy (in the morning)
- Medicines, including sleeping pills (Usually, providers recommend that you use sleeping pills for a short period of time.)
- Natural products, such as melatonin (These products may help some people but are generally for short-term use. Make sure to check with your health care provider before you take any of them.)

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U.S. National Library of Medicine (NLM), MedlinePlus. (Updated 2021, September 21). *Sleep disorders*. Retrieved October 15, 2021, from <https://medlineplus.gov>

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## BREAK THE RUMINATION CYCLE

Do you ever find yourself stewing over work, past events, or worries when you'd like to be relaxing, paying attention to your partner or child, or sleeping? This repetitive return to unhappy or disturbing thoughts without productive resolution is called *ruminating*, and it can be damaging to your health, your relationships, and your ability to move forward in life.

You might ruminate over

- A frustrating or worrisome situation at work
- A conflict with your partner, a friend, your boss, or a coworker
- Criticism you've received
- Financial pressure

### Why Rumination Is a Problem

If rumination led to solutions and improvements in your life, it might be a good thing. Too often, however, rumination simply adds to your stress and undermines your wellbeing:

- Rumination revives the negative emotions that are associated with an unhappy or disturbing event. Instead of processing those emotions and moving on, rumination causes your brain to stir them up over and over again.
- A habit of rumination prevents you from relaxing, restoring your mental energy, and enjoying the moment you are in. It can muddle your thinking and damage relationships,

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## BREAK THE RUMINATION CYCLE

fueling a destructive cycle that can intensify self-critical thoughts and feelings of isolation.

- Rumination can interfere with your sleep, and poor sleep quality can negatively affect your thinking, your ability to manage your moods, and your health.
- Rumination is associated with depression. A habit of rumination can prolong an episode of depression, while interfering with efforts to get needed social support.

### How to Break the Rumination Cycle

When you get stuck in a cycle of rumination, it can be hard to get out of it. The recurring thoughts can harden into a habit with similarities to unhealthy lifestyle habits like smoking or drinking (but fortunately without the addictive biochemistry). To avoid this, it's best to address rumination quickly, before it becomes an established thought pattern.

Here are some tips for when you find yourself ruminating:

- **Make productive efforts to find a solution.** Instead of simply reliving your unhappy experience, look for a solution. Think about what you can do to improve the situation, keep it from happening again, or move on from it on a positive forward

path. Break down the steps you need to take to move forward, and plan in your mind how you'll take them. Become a problem solver.

- **If you are ruminating about work when you are home, build a real or symbolic transition into the shift from work to home life.** A commute can do this. So can a walk around the block, a change of clothes, turning on some relaxing music, or anticipating a happy conversation unrelated to work.
- **Distract yourself from the ruminating thoughts.** Do something that makes it difficult or impossible to think your repetitive thoughts:
  - Call a friend or family member (and don't even think about mentioning your ruminating worry).
  - Read a book or listen to an audiobook.
  - Play a game or do a challenging puzzle.
  - Watch a movie.
  - Listen to music that absorbs your attention.
  - Exercise.
  - Go for a walk around your neighborhood or in nature.
  - Engage in a hobby or passion (drawing, woodworking, music, knitting, etc.).

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## BREAK THE RUMINATION CYCLE

*Continued*

- **Challenge your thinking.** Is this a real problem, or could you be blowing it out of proportion? Might there be another explanation for what you think happened? Might someone else see the situation differently? If you're imagining worst-case outcomes, ask yourself how realistic those are? What's a more likely outcome? Talking to a friend might help you put things in perspective and get a more realistic assessment. (Beware of using a friend to help fan the flames of your rumination.)
- **Avoid overthinking mistakes.** Everyone makes mistakes. It's how people learn and grow. Making a mistake does not make you a less worthy person. If you've made a mistake, think about what you can learn from it and do differently next time. Forgive and be kind to yourself.
- **Try mindfulness and meditation.** In the practice of mindfulness, you focus on the present moment, your experience right now. What happened yesterday or earlier today is not relevant. When engaging in mindfulness you also accept and embrace your current experience, including its joy and pain. You let go of judgment. Clearing your mind in meditation can have a similar effect in breaking the cycle of ruminating thoughts. Both practices shift your attention, make you aware of your thoughts and feelings, and help you move toward acceptance—all while helping you calm your body and your mind.

### When You're Stuck in Rumination

When you're stuck in an enduring cycle of rumination and one-time measures aren't enough, it can help to deal with the problem as an unhealthy habit. Habits are triggered by cues in your environment, emotions, or thinking. When you experience a trigger, your habitual behavior or thinking follows a set pattern.

Here are some tips to break a rumination habit:

- **Identify the cues that trigger your ruminating thoughts.** When do you tend to ruminate? In the evening? At night when you're trying to sleep? After a particular type of event? When you're alone? When you're sad? In certain places? You might keep a log for a week or so to note the patterns of your ruminating thoughts. Recognizing the situations in which you have ruminating thoughts can help you identify the cues that trigger them.
- **Where you can, avoid or change the cues that trigger your rumination.** You might do this by changing your routine. If you tend to ruminate when you first get home from work and try to relax, do something else when you first get home. Call someone. Go for a walk. Read a chapter of a book. If watching or listening to the news lowers your mood and invites rumination, watch or listen to

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# BREAK THE RUMINATION CYCLE

Continued

something else. Shaking up your routine can help you disrupt your ruminating habit.

- **Find alternative responses to your rumination cues, and practice them.** Once you've identified the cues that trigger your rumination, come up with alternative responses to them. Take a different action when you experience those cues. If feeling sad is your trigger, pay attention to your emotions, and immediately do something different when you start to feel sad. Find a distracting activity that keeps your mind off your rumination. Over time, and with lots of practice, this new response will start to override your old ruminating habit.

### How Therapy Can Help

Rumination habits can become so deeply ingrained that you may have trouble breaking the cycle by yourself:

- The practice of mindfulness can be helpful for many people and can be more helpful under the guidance of an expert.
- Working with a professional therapist, especially one with expertise in cognitive-behavioral therapy, can help you change unproductive thought patterns, including persistent rumination. There's even a specialty for helping people with rumination habits: *rumination-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy*.

- Because rumination can be associated with depression and other mental health problems, if your rumination problem is persistent and keeping you from living to your full potential, and especially if you have symptoms of another mental health problem, you should make an appointment with a mental health therapist.

### For More Information

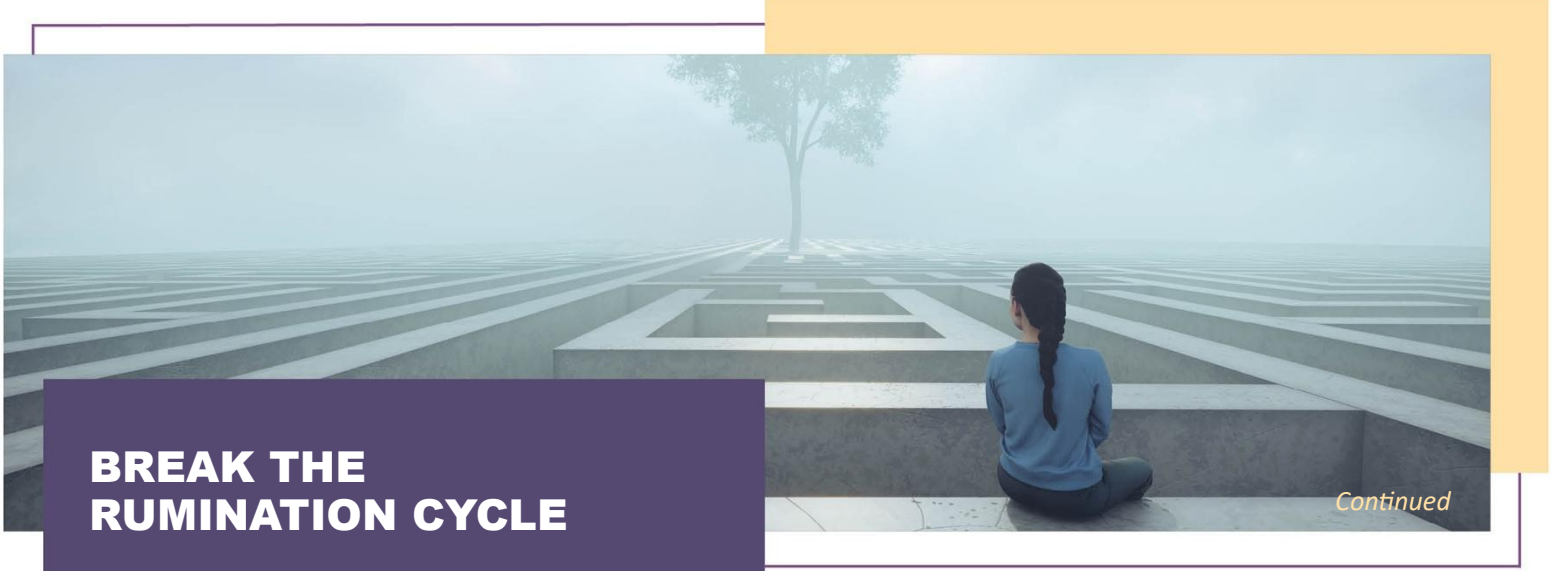
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"How to stop ruminating thoughts," *Medical News Today* (Last medically reviewed November 8, 2019). <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/326944>

"How to turn off work thoughts during your free time," Ted Talks (By G. Winch, November 2019). [https://www.ted.com/talks/guy\\_winch\\_how\\_to\\_turn](https://www.ted.com/talks/guy_winch_how_to_turn)

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# BREAK THE RUMINATION CYCLE

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\_off\_work\_thoughts\_during\_your\_free\_time. (A transcript is available in 25 languages)

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<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-squeaky-wheel/201306/the-seven-hidden-dangers-brooding-and-ruminating>

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# THE PLACE FOR MENTAL FITNESS



## What is mental fitness?

Have you ever thought about how mentally fit you are? You've probably heard of the buzz term *mental toughness*, but have you heard of *mental fitness*? Mental fitness is the ability to live life in a satisfying and sustainable way that enables you to cope with day-to-day challenges. It's not just about feeling and thinking good, it's about helping you perform at your best. In addition, as with physical fitness, you need to continue focusing on your mental fitness to maintain an optimal level. Alternatively, low levels of mental fitness can be improved with the right resources and effort.

Furthermore, with work, study, sports and relationships all carrying their own challenges and demands on your time, it is crucial for you to understand where your own mental fitness is. There are four key states of mental fitness that you may find yourself in. These include *floundering*, *languishing*, *struggling* and *thriving*. Moreover, and most importantly, you should assess your mental fitness without any judgement.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- How am I coping with stress?
- How am I performing at work and life?
- Which state am I in?

## Floundering

The state of floundering can be characterized by having low mental wellbeing and low performance. It is OK to be in this state occasionally. Remember, things can get pretty crazy at certain times of the year, for example, or you might have hit a temporary rough patch with your home life or job.

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## THE PLACE FOR MENTAL FITNESS

Continued

Indicators of the floundering state include:

- Feeling down, blue or depressed
- Feeling as though you are lacking purpose and meaning
- Making little movement towards goals
- Having high levels of ruminative thinking
- Feeling like everything is a struggle

### Languishing

Languishing is when you are experiencing high levels of mental wellbeing and low levels of performance. While life is throwing little stress your way, you may lack progress, challenge and achievement. As a result, this puts you at risk of developing a low self-esteem and a drop in your mental health.

Indicators of the languishing state include:

- Feeling carefree and easy
- "Rusting out"—losing skills and abilities you previously held
- Lacking discipline
- Lacking momentum in life

### Struggling

This state of struggling is characterized by low levels of mental wellbeing and high levels of performance. This is

unsustainable and places you at risk of burnout.

Indicators of the struggling state include

- Prioritizing work over self
- Beginning to feel overwhelmed
- Feeling tired and overworked
- Sacrificing self-care (e.g. sleep, exercise, good eating, relationships)

### Thriving

This is the desirable state of mental fitness. In this thriving state, you have high levels of mental wellbeing *and* performance. This is the sweet spot of mental fitness, because it will lead to consistent positive mental wellbeing and continued pursuits of purpose.

Indicators of the thriving state include

- The ability to integrate life and work positively
- Feeling in control and capable
- Responding well to challenges and setbacks
- Feeling of state of *flow*
- Having a consistent emotional and mental state

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Veretis. (Revised 2024 [Ed.]). *The place for mental fitness* (B. Schuette & E. Morton, Eds.). Toronto: Workplace Options (WPO).