



People With Depression Get Stuck on Bad Thoughts, Unable to Turn Their Attention Away, Study Suggests

By [The Ratey Institute](#)

We all have our ups and downs -- a fight with a friend, a divorce, the loss of a parent. But most of us get over it. Only some go on to develop major depression. Now, a new study, which will be published in an upcoming issue of *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, suggests part of the reason may be that people with depression get stuck on bad thoughts because they're unable to turn their attention away.

People who don't recover from negative events seem to keep going over their troubles. "They basically get stuck in a mindset where they relive what happened to them over and over again," says Jutta Joormann, of the University of Miami. She co wrote the new study with Sara Levens and Ian H. Gotlib of Stanford University. "Even though they think, oh, it's not helpful, I should stop thinking about this, I should get on with my life -- they can't stop doing it," she says. She and her colleagues thought people with depression might have a problem with working memory. Working memory isn't just about remembering a shopping list or doing multiplication in your head; it's about what thoughts you keep active in your mind. So, Joormann thought, maybe people who get stuck on negative thoughts have problems turning their mind to a new topic.

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DEPRESSION



BAD THOUGHTS

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