


The depression habit spiral narrows your perspective and works to keep you looking inward. The more negatively introspective you become, the firmer depression takes hold and the more you get sucked into depressed thinking and tunnel vision.

Using purposeful distraction is a powerful way to resist this depressed 'rumination' habit. So, one way to choose useful activities for your list is to look at how well they might distract you and engage your mind in something purposeful or meaningful.

1. My 'focusing outward' ideas

If you are feeling very low, then very simple distractions are all you need to aim for – as long as they are reasonably constructive. You can build up towards more meaningful ways to engage your time, energy and hope. Look at the suggestions on the 'Focusing outward' page and make a list of activities that you can refer to when you need ideas for something to distract you from depressive rumination.

1. Three simple distractions I could use if I am feeling particularly low:
(eg. watching a light-hearted TV show, cooking myself a nice meal, asking someone else to hang out or play a video game, getting my washing done or tidying up my room...)



***"I know if I have too much time I have too much mental energy and if it's not occupied somewhere else I just start analysing things that don't need analysing and finding problems and getting myself down about it. But if I'm occupied with lots of things then I am happier with that."* – Daniel**

2. Two ways/places I could regularly get myself outdoors, into natural surroundings:

3. Three ways I could continue to break isolation and distract myself through contact with other people:
(eg. making the effort to get out of my room and hang out when others are watching telly or cooking a meal; joining in with an activity at the SU or a club or society; making contact with friends in other places via Facebook or texting; doing a group exercise or yoga class; perhaps even joining a 'penpal' scheme to make a new contact with someone in a different country or setting)



4. One creative activity I could try as an outlet for my feelings:
(eg. writing, drawing, making music, model-making, dancing)

Remember this is not about performance, but just creative expression

5. One idea to aim for doing something useful in the wider world:
(eg. getting/keeping a part-time job to earn money, doing something for a friend, volunteering for a charity or project)

Don't worry if this seems to daunting right now - this can be something to work towards

6. One idea for how to use my uni/college work as a distraction:
(Identify aspects of your subject or course that you might be able to enjoy just immersing yourself in, rather than focusing on assessments etc - eg. finding out more about a specific topic you're really interested in.)

If there really isn't anything within your course that fits this description then choose something else that you are interested in researching/finding out more about. Again, it is unrealistic to expect this of yourself if you are feeling very low right now, so this should just be listed as something to work towards

2. My focusing outward plan

Choose one of the ideas you have listed above to plan to put into action this week. Write an intention statement to help you make a clear, focused goal.

My focusing outward intention statement:

Example:

This week I will ___ take a break and start filing the pile of papers on my desk ___ (what)
___ if I notice that I am feeling low and can't concentrate on my work ___ (when)
___ (in my room) ___ (where)
___ I will do that for 30 minutes and then get back to my work ___ (how/long)

This week I will _____ (what)

_____ (when)

_____ (where)

_____ (how/long)

3. Next steps

Build on this strategy by reading the 'Getting going' page and planning more ways to increase purposeful and enjoyable activity in your life.

