

How Stress Works with Our Thinking Brain

1. We go over and over things in our minds

	Does this happen for you?
<p>About two million years ago, pre-humans started to get smart. We evolved the ability to think, ruminate, anticipate, imagine and predict. Whereas the gazelle will calm down quite quickly after it has escaped from the cheetah, we humans are likely to think, 'What would've happened if I'd got caught?' Frightening fantasies and images may come up in our mind as a result. Perhaps we wake up in the night and think, 'What would have happened if I hadn't seen the cheetah? What if I get caught tomorrow? What about letting the children go out – maybe it's too dangerous?' So for us the threat has not passed away. We play it over and over in our minds and in this way constantly maintain and stimulate our stress response.</p>	

2. Our minds are pulled back into the past and ahead into the future.

	Does this happen for you?
<p>In addition, humans have evolved the ability to understand and think about themselves as individual selves. We can worry about so many things to do with our individual self – such as whether or not people like us, whether our job is secure, whether we will be able to pass our exams and so on. The sense of self gives rise to a constant monitoring of potential threats to our 'self' both now and in the future. We have a capacity to worry about all kinds of things linked to our 'self' identity. So, this thinking brain constantly pulls us away from the present moment into the past and the future.</p>	