

# Getting Back on TRAC After a Breakup

## Objective

To identify healthy ways to cope by using the TRAP/TRAC tool.

## What to Know

After a breakup, rumination and worry can trap you in an emotional loop. Perhaps you believe it will help with reducing upsetting feelings, understanding what happened and why the breakup occurred, and eventually moving on. Unfortunately, rumination and worry are usually unproductive – and can actually make your situation worse. To react with rumination (*excessively thinking the same negative thoughts about the past*) and worry (*thinking about the future in a way that makes you anxious*) is like grabbing a shovel when you are trapped in a deep hole. You might believe that digging hard and fast is productive, but in fact it just takes you deeper into distress. If you have gotten into a habit of ruminating, it can be harmful to your mental health, as it can:

- prolong or intensify depression
- increase negative thinking
- decrease effective problem-solving
- increase uncertainty
- impair your ability to think and process emotions

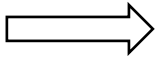
If you find yourself frequently ruminating or worrying, it can be hard to stop. Ask yourself if there is something healthy you can do instead. If there is – do it. If you cannot think of anything – redirect your attention and energy to something more productive.

Active problem solving is different from rumination and worry, which happens solely in your head. Choosing an alternative way to cope is more helpful, and you are more likely to think clearly and come up with solutions. You might take a walk, spend time with loved ones, or engage in a hobby – all of which can help pull you out of the TRAP and get you back on TRAC.

If something triggers you into rumination or worry, acknowledge what is happening and pull yourself out of the TRAP. Get back on TRAC by choosing alternative ways to cope. Review the following example.

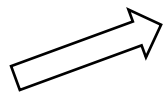
**Trigger**

*I saw my ex at the grocery store with his new girlfriend.*



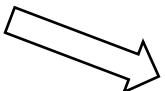
**Response**

*I ran out of the store and sat in my car and cried. I just couldn't stop thinking about how much I miss my ex.*



**Avoidance Pattern**

*I couldn't stop thinking about my ex and what went wrong with us. I started drinking and didn't stop until I feel asleep.*



**Alternative Coping**

*I called my friend and talked about how I felt when I was at the store. Then, I watched a funny movie.*

**What to Do**

First, answer the following questions.

Describe triggers that cause you to ruminate or worry.

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How do you usually respond?

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Are there certain times of day you are more likely to ruminate? To worry? Explain.

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Have you noticed a pattern in the way you tend to get trapped in worry and rumination? Describe what happens.

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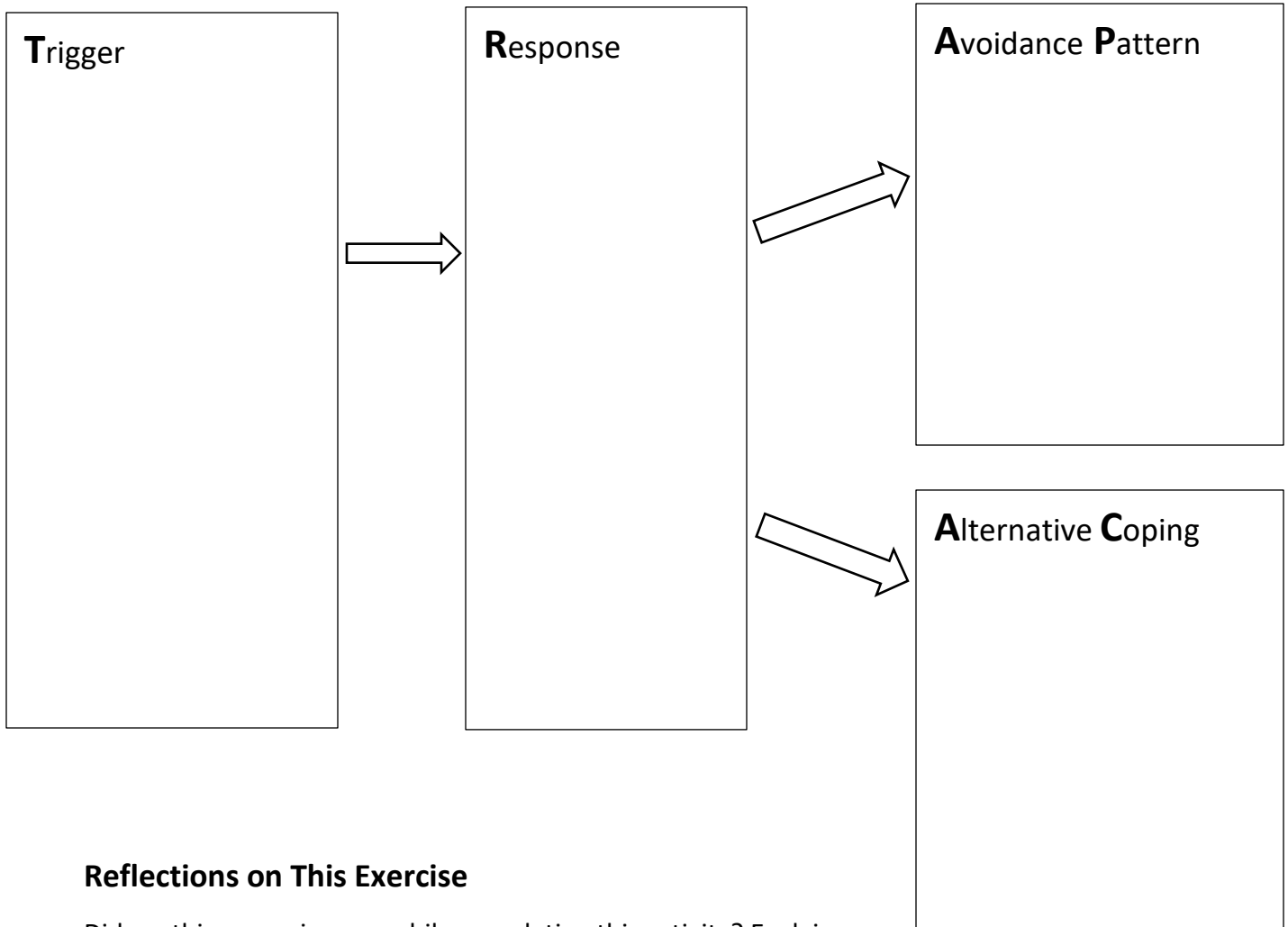
What are some alternative ways you can cope? In other words, instead of getting trapped in worry and rumination, what can you do instead?

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Fill in the following diagram when you are triggered. Describe the trigger and how you responded. In the “Avoidance Pattern” box, describe how you might normally react (when you are in the TRAP of rumination and worry). In the “Alternative Coping” box, write down some ways you can get back on TRAC and break the pattern of rumination and worry.



### Reflections on This Exercise

Did anything surprise you while completing this activity? Explain.

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What was the biggest obstacle you encountered when completing this exercise? Describe.

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Were you successful at getting back on TRAC? \_\_\_\_\_

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

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