

# Replay Loop Check

A reflection guide for noticing when calls, conversations, or decisions keep repeating in your mind.



# When Something Keeps Replaying

Your brain doesn't replay events randomly. It replays calls, conversations, decisions, or moments that felt **intense, unfinished, or important** - because it's still trying to make sense of them. That loop is often your mind's way of checking for missed details, possible mistakes, or anything that could matter later.


This isn't weakness. It's how the mind processes high-stakes experiences. The problem isn't the review itself - it's when the loop runs all night without giving you anything useful back. When that happens, the replay stops being problem-solving and starts becoming a drain on your focus, sleep, and recovery.

For officers, this is especially common after tense calls, use-of-force decisions, welfare checks, critical incidents, or even routine interactions that turned sideways fast. You may walk away looking calm and composed, but your brain keeps running the file in the background: What did I miss? Did I handle that right? Should I have said it differently?

That kind of replay is a normal response to responsibility. Officers are trained to notice threats, anticipate consequences, and carry a lot of accountability in a short amount of time. The same instincts that help you perform under pressure can also keep your mind locked on a scene long after the scene is over.

The goal is not to shut off reflection. The goal is to recognize when reflection has turned into a loop. A useful review helps you learn, adjust, and move forward. A stuck loop keeps pulling you back into the same moment without resolution.

Recognizing the loop is a form of self-awareness, not self-doubt. It means you know when your mind is processing and when it is spinning. That awareness gives you a chance to interrupt the cycle before it affects your sleep, your mood, your patience, or how you show up on the next shift.

 Noticing the loop is the first step to breaking it. That is not a sign of weakness - it is a sign that you're paying attention, staying honest with yourself, and taking your mental readiness seriously. This guide helps you do exactly that.

# What Is Replaying?

Name it. Get specific. Vague replays are harder to interrupt than ones you can actually identify.

## A Call

Something that happened on scene - a response, an outcome, a moment that didn't sit right.

## A Decision

A choice you made - or didn't make - that you keep second-guessing.

## A Conversation

Something said to you, by you, or left unsaid - with a partner, supervisor, or citizen.

## A Mistake

Real or perceived - something you handled differently in your head a hundred times since.

## A "What If?"

A scenario playing out an alternate outcome - one that may never come.

## Something You Saw or Heard

An image, sound, or detail that keeps surfacing without an obvious trigger.

Write it down in one sentence if you can. Naming it gives you some control over it.

# What Is the Loop Asking For?

Replays usually aren't random. They're pointing at something. Ask yourself what this loop might actually need.



## More Clarity

Do you need more information - facts, context, or a full picture - before you can let this rest?



## A Next Step

Is the loop telling you there's one concrete action you haven't taken yet?



## Support

Is this something better processed out loud - with a partner, peer support, or someone who gets it?



## Closure

Is there an ending that hasn't come yet - an answer, a follow-up, or an outcome you're still waiting on?



## Reassurance

Do you need someone to tell you that you did what you could - and that it was enough?



## Time to Process

Sometimes there's no fix today. The loop just needs space - and permission to settle on its own timeline.

# Separate Useful Review From Ruminating

Not all replaying is the same. Some of it helps you grow. Some of it just grinds you down. Learning to tell the difference matters.

## ✓ Useful Review

This kind of replay **moves somewhere**. It gives you something back.

- Helps me understand what happened and why
- Points to a specific action I can take
- Teaches me something for next time
- Leads to a decision or a conversation
- Feels uncomfortable but productive
- Has a natural stopping point

## ☐ Ruminating Loop

This kind of replay **keeps circling**. It costs you without paying you back.

- Replays the same moment without new insight
- Leads to worse-case scenarios, not answers
- Runs on its own - I can't switch it off
- Leaves me more tired, not more resolved
- Punishes more than it informs
- Has no clear endpoint

☐ If it's useful review - let it run. If it's a loop - interrupt it on purpose. That's not avoidance. That's discipline.

# Choose What Happens Next

You don't have to solve it tonight. But you do need to make a deliberate choice about where this goes - instead of letting it run on autopilot until 3am.

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## Write It Down

Get it out of your head and onto paper. One sentence. What happened, what's looping, what you're unsure about. Writing it externalizes it.

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## Talk to Someone

A partner, a peer support contact, a chaplain, or someone who knows the job. You don't have to go deep - sometimes just saying it out loud is enough.

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## Take One Action

If the loop is pointing at something unfinished - send the email, make the call, write the note. One real step often quiets the replay.

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## Set It Aside Until Tomorrow

Decide deliberately: *I'm done with this tonight.* Put a time on it - "I'll think about this at 0800." Then hold the boundary.

**Review can help you learn. Replaying the same moment all night only drains you.**

You showed up. You did the job. Give your mind permission to stand down.

