After the event: stopping the replay

Why going over it again and again makes it look worse than it was.

After a social situation, the anxious mind runs a post-mortem. It replays the event, searches for mistakes, and usually finds some. By the end, an ordinary conversation has become a disaster in memory.

Why the replay cannot be trusted

- It is based on how you felt, not on what happened. Feeling awkward gets remembered as looking awkward.
- It picks out the worst moments. The parts that went fine are left out.
- You were watching yourself at the time, so you have very little information about how others reacted.
- Each replay adds detail that was never there.

Stepping out of it

1. **Notice the replay has started.** "I am doing a post-mortem."
2. **Ask what it is for.** Is it helping me solve anything, or just making me feel worse?
3. **Do one fair review, in writing, then stop.** Use the boxes below.
4. **Move your attention.** Do something that takes concentration. When the replay returns, label it and come back.

Facts	What went fine, or even well
What a camera would have recorded	

If a friend described this evening to me, what would I say to them?

What I will take from it. One line, then leave it.

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