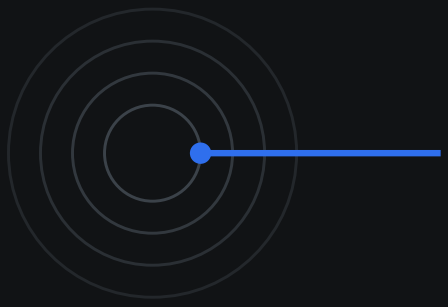
POCKET PLAYBOOKS



Stop Overthinking

GUIDE + WORKBOOK

Write it out. Decide.
Move on.

8 short chapters • Loop pages • Fact or story • Decision pages • Worry window

START HERE

How to use this book

Overthinking is a thought on repeat. Thinking harder rarely ends it; writing it down, checking it and making a call usually does. This book has two parts. Part one explains why loops happen and how each tool works. Part two is the pages you use.

1 **Read part one first**

Eight short chapters, about forty minutes in total. Each one ends by pointing you to the page in part two where you use it.

2 **When a thought keeps looping**

Go to section 02. Write the loop out exactly as it sounds, then work down the next three pages. About fifteen minutes.

3 **When you are stuck on a choice**

Section 03. The decision page gives you a deadline and a "good enough" rule, so you can stop reopening it.

4 **Every day, ten minutes**

The worry window in section 04. Park thoughts during the day, deal with them in one short slot.

5 **Once a week**

The weekly check. What you decided, what is still replaying, what helped.

TWO SIZES IN YOUR DOWNLOAD

A4 and US Letter versions, ready to print or to write on in any PDF app on a tablet. Print the repeatable pages as often as you need. The contents page is hyperlinked.

> A thinking tool, not therapy. If worry is getting in the way of daily life, please talk to a doctor or a qualified professional.

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What overthinking actually is

Thinking about a problem is useful. You look at it, work out what you can do, and do something. Overthinking is what happens when the thinking stops producing anything new. The same thought comes round again, in the same words, and leaves you exactly where it found you, only more tired.

A simple test: after ten minutes of thinking about it, do you know something you did not know before, or have you decided anything? If yes, you were thinking. If you are still holding the same question you started with, you were looping.

Two directions a loop can point

Most loops point one of two ways. Some point backwards: going over a conversation, a mistake, an email you sent. Others point forwards: what if it goes wrong, what if they say no, what if I choose the wrong one. Backward loops try to change something that has already happened. Forward loops try to make something certain that cannot be certain yet. Neither can succeed, which is why they keep going.

> **A loop is a question your mind keeps asking because thinking alone cannot answer it.**

That is the whole idea behind this book. If thinking alone cannot answer the question, more thinking will not either. Something else has to happen: you write it down, check it against the facts, make a decision, or put it away until a set time on purpose. Each of those is a page in part two.

What this book is, and what it is not

This is a practical guide with worksheets. It is not therapy and it does not diagnose anything. Overthinking is a habit almost everyone has to some degree, and the tools here are ordinary, well-worn ones: writing things out, separating facts from assumptions, setting decision rules and giving worry a time slot.

Fact or story?

A fact is something that would hold up if someone else checked it. A story is what you add to it: the meaning, the motive, the prediction. "She has not replied in two days" is a fact. "She is annoyed with me" is a story. "I always mess these things up" is a story dressed up as a fact.

Stories are not always wrong. The point of separating them is that you can only act on facts. You can reply to a message, check a date or ask a question. You cannot do anything with a story except believe it or not.

Stories that show up again and again

- Mind-reading: deciding what someone else thinks.
- Fortune-telling: treating a prediction as if it were certain.
- All-or-nothing: if it is not perfect, it counts as a failure.
- Worst-case jumping: going straight to the most extreme version.
- Always and never: one event becomes a rule about who you are.

When your loop is sorted into two columns, look at the story column and ask: what would I say if a friend told me this about themselves? The answer is usually kinder, and more accurate, than what you have been telling yourself.

Then look at the likely case

Forward loops play the worst case on repeat. Write all three, the worst, the most likely and the best, and base the likely one on the fact column only. Then finish the line "Even in the worst case, I would be able to..." Most people find they would cope with far more than the loop assumed.

TRY THIS IN PART TWO

Work through "Fact or story?", then "Worst, likely, best" and "What can I do about it?" in that order.

Write the loop out

Exactly how it sounds in your head. Don't tidy it. Keep going until it starts to repeat on paper.

DATE _____ LOOP TYPE _____

Said in one sentence, the thing I am afraid of is

Fact or story?

Copy each part of the loop into one column. A fact would hold up if someone else checked it.

Fact

What I know for sure

Story

What I am assuming or predicting

LOOKING ONLY AT THE FACTS, WHAT IS ACTUALLY TRUE?

The decision page

For the choice you keep reopening. Fill it in once, sign it, and stop re-deciding.

THE DECISION

Option A _____

\+ _____

_____

– _____

_____

Option B _____

\+ _____

_____

– _____

_____

WHAT MATTERS MOST HERE (PICK TWO)

1 _____

2 _____

Good enough means The point where I stop looking for a better option.

I will decide by A date. Not "when I feel sure".

I choose _____ Date _____

Once it is signed, it stays decided unless the facts change.

Small systems.
Big resets.

Pocket Playbooks

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