STOP OVERTHINKING

FOR A CHANGE

A practical coaching guide for moving from rumination to intentional action

Thinking can be a strength - until it becomes a loop.
Deep processing, nuance, and thoughtfulness can be powerful strengths. When thinking continues without producing clarity or action, however, it can become rumination, doubt, and indecision. This guide helps you recognize the pattern and redirect your thinking toward purposeful action.

The 4-Part Action Framework

Use these four practices to interrupt mental loops and create movement.

1 Name + Reframe Identify the thinking pattern and create a more useful perspective. **Benefit:** Opens new possibilities and reduces mental dead ends.	**2 Interrupt** Use a deliberate cue to return your attention to the present. **Benefit:** Helps you refocus on what is actually in front of you.
3 Change the "What If" Redirect your question toward an empowering possibility. **Benefit:** Turns brainpower toward constructive scenarios.	**4 Use Values as a Filter** Let your core values guide the next action. **Benefit:** Creates a mental shortcut when options compete.

The goal is not to stop thinking. It is to make your thinking useful.

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1. Name + Reframe

Notice the mental pattern before it decides the outcome for you.

1. Name + Reframe

Naming your patterns of overthinking and reframing them can improve perspective so you can see new possibilities and find solutions instead of reaching mental dead ends.

Examples

- All-or-nothing thinking: “If I don’t get this right, I’m a complete failure.” Look for nuance and additional options.
- Overgeneralization: “I’m always screwing up.” Replace extreme words such as always or never and treat events individually.
- Filtering: Fixating on one flaw despite otherwise positive feedback. Ask whether continuing to focus on the negative is actually helping you.

Why it helps: Reframing creates distance from automatic thinking and helps you identify alternatives.

Quick Practice

Name one recurring thought. Then ask: Is this a fact, an interpretation, or a pattern? What is a more balanced way to view it?

My recurring thought:

A more balanced reframe:

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2-3. Interrupt + Redirect

Break the spiral, then give your mind a better question to answer.

2. Interrupt the Pattern

When you catch yourself lost in unhelpful thoughts, use a deliberate interruption to ease yourself out of the spiral and return to the present moment.

Examples

- Silently say “Stop,” or picture a stop sign.
- Imagine the worry floating away in a balloon or moving downstream.
- Use a simple physical cue that reminds you to redirect your attention.

Why it helps: A deliberate interruption helps bring your mind back to the present so you can concentrate on the task at hand.

3. Change the “What If” Narrative

Instead of automatically imagining criticism, failure, or worst-case outcomes, direct your questions toward constructive possibilities that support action.

Examples

- What if the senior leadership team loves my work?
- What if my idea is the breakthrough the project needs?
- What if this proposal changes how we work for the better?

Why it helps: Your mind naturally looks for answers to questions. Choosing better questions directs creativity toward scenarios that empower rather than immobilize you.

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4. Use Values as a Filter

Let what matters most simplify the next decision.

4. Use Your Core Values as a Filter for Action

Core values are principles that guide and inform your actions. They can reduce overthinking by giving you a mental shortcut when a decision feels complicated.

Examples

- If integrity is a core value, ask: “What action brings me closer to integrity?”
- Use the same approach with values such as courage, freedom, stability, service, learning, or respect.

Why it helps: Values can reduce internal tension by helping you evaluate choices against what matters most.

Coach’s Note

Your depth of perception and thoughtfulness are gifts. The goal is not to eliminate thoughtful reflection; it is to notice when reflection stops being productive. Practice building new habits that interrupt rumination and protect space for the thoughts that truly deserve your attention.

Taking Action

Choose one real situation and move from thought to aligned action.

The decision or situation I am overthinking:

The core value I want to use as my filter:

The action that best aligns with that value:

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Taking Action Exercise

Move one real situation from overthinking to intentional action.

1. The situation I am overthinking:

2. The thought pattern I notice (all-or-nothing, overgeneralizing, filtering, worst-case thinking, other):

3. A more useful reframe:

4. My empowering "what if" question:

5. The core value I want to use as my filter:

6. One action I will take within the next 24-48 hours:

My pattern-interruption cue:

> **Firestarter**
> Progress does not require complete certainty. Choose the next aligned action and let movement create new information.

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Power Thoughts for Overthinking

Use these as grounding statements when your mind begins to spiral.

Source note: References in the source include Melody Wilding, LMSW (Psychology Today) and Julia Kristina, M.A. Psych.

THOUGHTS 1-8	THOUGHTS 9-16	THOUGHTS 18-24
#1 I am capable of handling whatever comes next. *Confidence grows through experience.*	#9 I am more than my productivity. *Your worth is not limited to output.*	#17 What would I tell a friend who was feeling like this? *Open the door to self-compassion.*
#2 Small steps forward still count as progress. *Tiny shifts keep momentum moving.*	#10 Worrying about the future will not make me more prepared. *Worry can create an illusion of control.*	#18 It is okay to pause and breathe before reacting. *A pause creates choice.*
#3 I am allowed to choose peace over proving myself. *You do not have to earn rest or peace.*	#11 Not everything needs to be solved right now. *One step at a time reduces overwhelm.*	#19 I cannot control everything, but I can control how I respond. *Focus on what is within your control.*
#4 My worth is not determined by what I achieve. *Your value is inherent.*	can choose how I move forward. *Redirect attention toward action.*	#20 I do not have to believe everything my anxious mind tells me. *Question worst-case stories.*
#5 Every emotion I feel is valid, even if I do not fully understand it. *Validation can reduce shame and support processing.*	#13 Other people's opinions are not my responsibility. *You do not have to manage every perception.*	#21 This feeling is temporary, even if it does not feel like it right now. *Perspective helps when emotions feel consuming.*
#6 Perfection is not required; progress is enough. *Shift attention from perfectionism to growth.*	#14 I deserve to take up space and set boundaries. *Boundaries are self-respect in action.*	#22 I have made it through hard moments before - I can handle this too. *Past resilience strengthens self-trust.*
#7 Feeling uncomfortable does not mean I am doing something wrong - it might mean I am growing. *Discomfort can be part of progress.*	#15 I am not behind; I am on my own timeline. *Interrupt comparison spirals.*	#23 My thoughts are not always facts. *Thoughts can be examined, not automatically believed.*
#8 Rest is not a reward, it is a necessity. *Recovery can interrupt burnout-fueled spirals.*	#16 I am allowed to have hard emotions without judging myself for them. *Acceptance can reduce resistance.*	#24 Just because I feel this way now does not mean I will feel this way forever. *Feelings can change over time.*

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