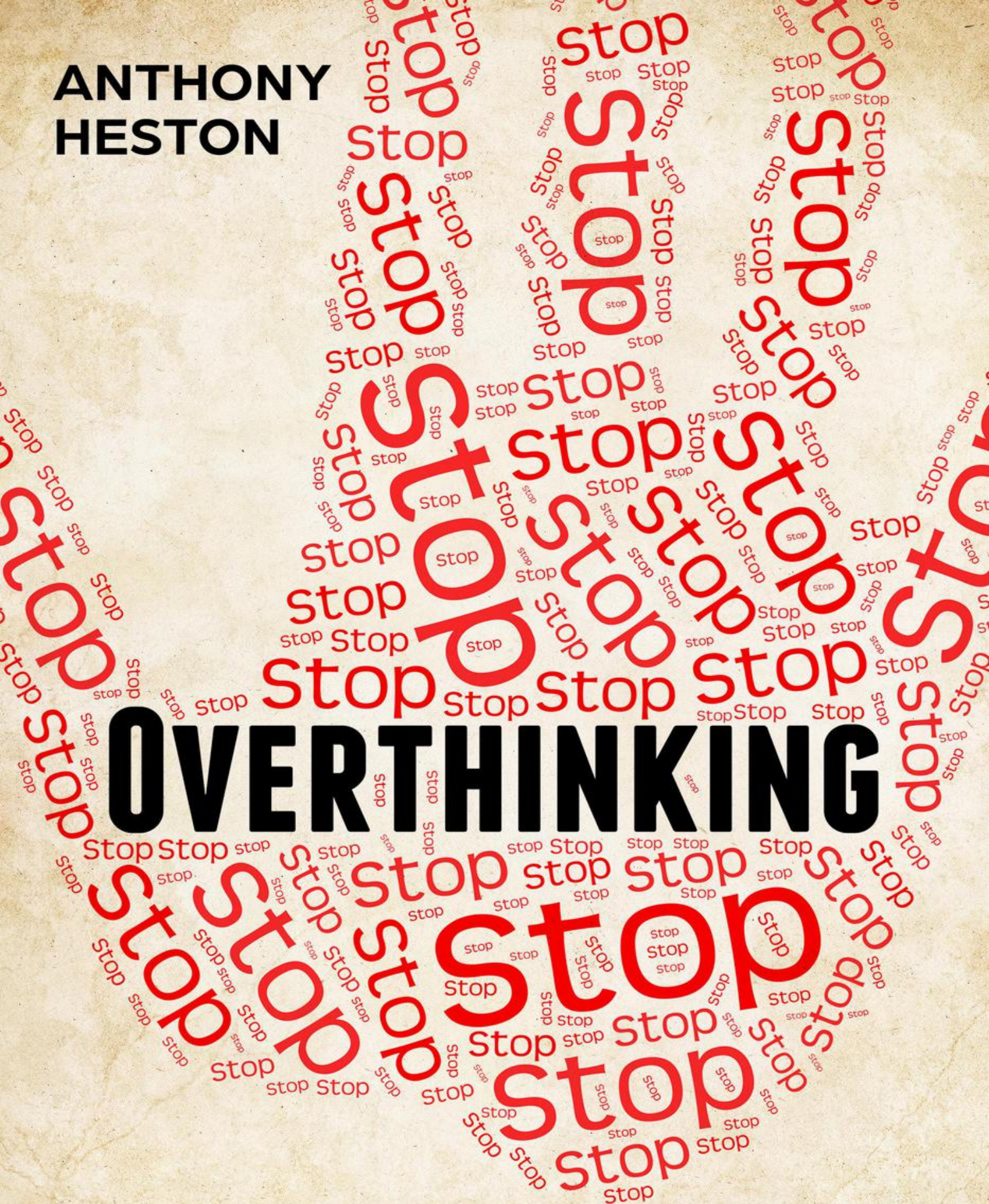


**ANTHONY  
HESTON**



**PUTTING A STOP TO DESTRUCTIVE OVERTHINKING. PROVEN WAYS  
ON HOW TO STOP PROCRASTINATION, EXCESSIVE WORRYING AND  
GET REAL RESULTS IN YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE**



## **Overthinking:**

*Putting a STOP to Destructive  
Overthinking. Proven Ways to Stop  
Procrastination, Excessive Worrying  
and Get Real Results in your  
Personal and Professional Life*

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# Introduction

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THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS will discuss methods for ending the destructive cycle of excessive worrying that can lead to procrastination and problems in both your personal and professional life. Overthinking is defined as putting too much time thinking about or analyzing something in a way that is more harmful than helpful. Simply put, when so much energy, time, and thought is consumed by a problem, either real or imagined, you will find it very difficult to take action.

Real life situations are presented throughout the chapters of this book to present alternative thoughts and actions to maximize your ability to apply the tactics to your own life. All of the methods may not apply to you or your specific overthinking behaviors, implement any that do and dismiss those that do not.

Keep in mind that overthinking is a habit that took time to develop, as such, replacing those habits with new ones will take time as well. Daily application of the methods you choose to implement will be necessary to make the change. With time, actively restructuring how you think will stop the destructive overthinking, procrastination, and excessive worrying to improve the relationship with yourself and others. Refer to the chapters as needed in the future to maintain the personal changes.

There are plenty of books on this subject on the market, thanks again for choosing this one! Every effort was made to ensure it is full of as much useful information as possible, please enjoy the journey!



# Chapter 1: Prepare for Success

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HOW YOU START YOUR day may be one of the most important factors that would determine how your day will proceed. Hectic mornings tend to become hectic afternoons and so on. An effective tool to end overthinking is to prevent it from happening. Do you know that breakfast is skipped most of the time because you are spending too much time deciding what to wear? Is lack of organization preventing you from taking on a large task? Do you often plan to start something tomorrow? Next Monday? The 1<sup>st</sup> of the month? When life gets easier? When the time is right? As the start date becomes more and more vague, it becomes very likely that it will never happen.

If these situations sound familiar, you can take steps to put an end to the cycle. Just as the saying goes, “dress for the job you want instead of the one you have,” you must prepare for the life you want instead of the one you have.

This chapter will offer tips for breaking old habits that serve only to reinforce the cycle of overthinking and procrastination.

Replacing these habits with new practices to actively set yourself up for success is a good start to living the life you want to live.

Take a moment to consider how you start each day. Do you find that your morning routine is a stressful occurrence day after day? Do you have projects that are never completed because you don't know where to start? Do you feel trapped in a loop of constant failure and no longer see the point of trying anything better? Do you go to bed at night only to lie awake and wonder where the day went wrong? Are you focusing on one mistake you made a decade ago that could somehow be causing your current failure?

These types of negative feedback loops are common for the over-thinker. This inability to stop thinking about our mistakes/failures is called rumination. Fortunately, there are simple changes, that when practiced frequently, can break the cycle.

Spend a few extra minutes each night to ensure that the following morning will get off to a good start. Think of it as setting yourself up for success. Remember the 5 P's: Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance. Doesn't thinking about tomorrow directly contradict the title of this book? Shouldn't you be living in the moment? The difference between destructive overthinking and preparing for performance is that one results in a solution. Worrying for the sake of worrying offers no solution to the problem.

Do you have a favorite dinner service only restaurant that opens at 4:00 PM each day? Would you believe that the kitchen staff likely begins their day at 9:00 AM or earlier? What are they doing with those 7 hours? They are setting up for a successful dinner service. Vegetables need to be peeled, protein requires butchering, desserts are meticulously prepared and plated perfectly. Soup is cooked and cooled to hold for service. Several hours of preparation are done for a couple hours of activity.

In the culinary world, this concept is called "Mise en Place" which translates from French as everything in its place. Imagine if the restaurant did not take these steps to prepare. How long would a restaurant survive if each dish took 3 or 4 times long to reach the diner? Or if the food was ill-prepared in an attempt to hurry through dinner service? Maybe you aren't a Chef, but consider how this concept can be applied in your life. What can



you put in place at night so that your morning routine will be successful?

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DOES YOUR MORNING ROUTINE go something like this?

Alarm goes off and you hit snooze (maybe a few times). You get out of bed and stare at the closet for 5 precious minutes trying to remember the agenda for the day to determine what to wear. Is it today that your division is collecting trash on the highway after lunch? Or is that for tomorrow? You check your calendar to make sure a good dress isn't ruined picking up trash. Quick shower, make yourself presentable and head out the door. Realizing at the first stop sign that you forgot your coffee on the counter, didn't eat breakfast, or pack a lunch.

How does a morning like the one described affect the rest of the day? Perhaps, you stop at a convenience store for coffee and a donut, only to realize the long line of customers in front of you had the same idea. You will now be late for work. Rushing into work, you notice everyone is dressed casually. In your sleepy state, you had looked at your calendar wrong. Instead of going out for food on lunch hour, you will be going home to change into an outfit more appropriate for picking up trash. With some luck, there will be a granola bar in the pantry that you can eat on your way back to the office. After being late this morning, there is no way you can stop for lunch and be late again. This day is off to a horrible start, and the self-deprecating thoughts are there to reinforce the negative feelings toward yourself.

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-HOW COULD I HAVE FORGOTTEN to dress appropriately today?

-This is why I will never get a promotion; will my boss know that I forgot everything?

-I shouldn't have eaten those donuts. What was I thinking stopping for coffee at the busiest place in town?

-I can't ask for a raise when I don't even get to work on time.

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AT THE END OF THE DAY, you have spent so much time worrying and cursing yourself for each of these inconveniences that nothing productive was achieved. Meaning, you will have to work harder tomorrow just to get back on track.

Again, I ask, what can be put in place in the evening to streamline your morning routine? After dinner, while you are cleaning up the kitchen, take the time to pack lunch for tomorrow. It will only take a couple of minutes, and you are already in the kitchen. A small act of preparation instills positive feelings about yourself. Build a momentum to carry these positive feelings farther. Just as negativity reinforces itself, so does positivity.

Take a couple of more minutes in the evening to make a list of things to do tomorrow. Break large projects into smaller, more manageable, pieces; particularly if procrastination is a hindrance. It has been proven time and time again with research that breaking down large tasks into smaller ones makes the overall task less daunting. Set time limits to complete each small task. Sticking to the time frame allowed forces you to stay on track, preventing you from stopping to question if you should perhaps be taking a different approach.

For the overthinker, this can quickly escalate to stress associated with self-doubt and result in the task going another day without completion. Thus, reinforcing what your worrying mind had suggested. With each smaller portion of the task completed, you have reinforced the idea that you are capable of success. Each small moment of success builds the confidence that you can do what needs to be done.

You may choose to schedule a set amount of time for reflection into your day if the idea of stopping your “cold turkey” habits is too intimidating. This is acceptable as long as you choose a reasonable amount of time and hold yourself to it. No more than 20 minutes a day should be devoted to scheduled worrying. Set a timer and then let yourself worry all you want. Consider every outcome of a situation, ruminate on things you wish you could change, etc., until the timer rings you back. Then you must stop immediately and go back to something more productive. Over time you will no longer require the daily rumination. The set time will come and go without the desire to waste that time on negative thoughts. When the time comes, simply stop scheduling it into your day.

When you know what the following day will entail, you can choose an outfit. It can be helpful to physically lay out the clothes for the following day. At the end of the evening, you can go to sleep knowing that you have a plan in motion to prevent tomorrow from starting out like today did. You are less likely to lie awake worrying about everything that must be done tomorrow and wondering how you are possibly going to do it all.

Each evening, weekends included, write out your list for the following day and then consider what you can do now to prepare. Do this consistently, until it becomes a habit, a regular part of your routine. Taking the weekends off from your new habits can lead to backsliding into old, destructive, habits. You will soon see that less time is spent at night wondering and worrying which allows more time for relaxing and sleeping. More time for sleeping leads to waking up feeling refreshed instead of stressed.

Imagine if your mornings went something like this:

Your alarm goes off, you wake refreshed, prepared for this day. Take some deep breaths, do some light stretches, and remember that you have prepared for success. Enjoy a healthy breakfast and leave for work knowing that today will be less stressful than yesterday. At work, you begin on your list and finish every task for the day. Having prepared a healthy lunch last night, you avoid the mid-afternoon hunger pangs. At dinner, you enjoy positive interaction with your partner. You have accomplishments to discuss instead of failures. The positive result of your preparation inspires you to do it again tonight, and so a habit is born.

Too many decisions in the morning can be overstimulating which impacts your ability to make even simple choices. By eliminating the need to make multiple decisions first thing in the morning, you have allowed yourself the time to get ready for the day without stress. This lack of stress allows you to think clearly without becoming bogged down.

With decisions made, commit to sticking to them. Resist the urge to question the decisions made the evening before. Have confidence in yourself to trust your own judgment. Changing this about yourself will require deliberate practice. This means you will not simply go through the motions and expect real change. You will make decisions and deliberately follow through. With

time, you will instinctively begin to trust in your ability to make the right choices.

Perhaps you are the type of overthinker who struggles with work-life balance by thinking about work all evening. Do you find that you spend a large amount of time at night thinking about what tomorrow will hold? Obsessive thoughts about what you may have forgotten today? Preparing for the following day is one way to improve that balance. Make your list for the following day, lay out your clothes, pack a lunch, and then relax with the knowledge that you have done everything to ensure the following day is productive.

Preparing for your own success means doing more than just simplifying your morning routine. You are responsible for creating an environment suited to success. Do you surround yourself with people who will discuss problems, both real and imagined, with you at length? Do you spend hours with a friend complaining together without ever solving the issues at hand? There is a distinct difference between talking through a problem to work out a solution and talking about a problem just to talk about the problem.

An example of this concept is weight loss. As you get dressed for work, you notice your pants are snugger than they used to be and think about how you need to lose weight. The reaction to this perceived problem for an overthinker is commonly full of cognitive distortions. Cognitive distortions are inaccurate assessments that encourage negative thinking or feelings.



-HOW IS THAT EVEN GOING to be possible when your partner brings so much junk food into the house and today is free donut day at work?

-Your mom always said you were going to regret that sweet tooth with age. She was right, you're going to be fat for the rest of your days now.

-No one wants someone out of shape at the gym.

-What if they all stare at you?

-What if you use the machines wrong and you look like a fool?

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AN OVERTHINKER CAN come up with a billion and one reasons for being overweight and a billion and two reasons for not making a change. Add another person full of doubts to the equation, and both are set for failure. Spending the first few hours talking about the reasons for being overweight and then another few hours talking about why you can't lose weight: no time for the gym, I don't like healthy food and vegetables, and etc. This environment is not conducive to solving the problem. The cycle will continue until you recognize the need for a change in your patterns.

How can you change your environment to prepare for your own success? Make a list of your excuses for not acting. Use that list to remove the excuses by writing a simple solution next to each one. The act of writing out the excuses on paper can make it easier to see how self-sabotaging your thinking is. Set a time limit for choosing a solution and hold yourself to it. Set a physical timer if that will keep you accountable.

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EXCUSE: MY GYM IS SO far from home, and it takes forever to get there in rush hour. Solution: Choose a gym that is not out of your way. If you drive by a gym on your way home from work, consider getting a membership to that one.

Excuse: I always forget to bring gym clothes in the morning.

Solution: Keep a packed gym bag by the front door to remove the step of getting it ready in the morning. A forgotten gym bag in the morning will likely equate to a skipped workout. A skipped workout reinforces the negative opinion of yourself and opens the door to another evening of overthinking your mistake or perceived failure.

Excuse: It is so hard to eat healthy when I go out for lunch.

Solution: Pack your lunch. Quick access to a healthy lunch removes the temptation of a drive-thru for fat packed fast food.

Excuse: I don't even know what to do at the gym when I get there.



Solution: Ask a friend who goes to the gym if they would share some pointers or, better yet, if they would like to go workout with you.

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THE EXCUSES SOUND A lot more reasonable in your head than they do on paper. Apply this concept to any situation you find yourself thinking obsessively about without resolution.

- Identify the goal.
- Make a list of your reasons for not achieving the goal.
- Identify changes you can make to prepare for success.
- Surround yourself with individuals who are positive and results-driven rather than negative individuals who struggle to act.

What can you do to apply these practices to your own life? Do your “Mise en Place” each day. Remember your 5 P’s: Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance. Take the time to put everything in place to minimize stress, overthinking, and procrastination. Create an environment for yourself that encourages success rather than one that feeds your habit of ruminating over every detail. Avoid surrounding yourself with other overthinkers and instead spend time with individuals who identify a problem, form a solution, and act to reach their goal.

Organize your life in a way that leaves little room for worry. Go to bed at night with peace of mind knowing that you have prepared for the next day. Sleep well, without the anxiety of how hectic your morning will be. Wake up refreshed and enjoy the rewards of your preparation. Use the positive feelings to propel yourself toward a day with minimal stress and maximum production.



## Chapter 2: Accept Not Being in Control

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“I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.” -Charles R. Swindoll

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MR. SWINDOLL SOUNDS quite enlightened, but what did he mean with this statement? You cannot control everything in your life, and no amount of wondering, worrying, or rethinking every situation can change that. Relinquishing control can be intimidating to the controlling nature of an overthinker. While you cannot control everything that happens in your life, only you can control your reaction to anything. Remember that. Live by these words. Repeat them to yourself as needed. An individual in control of their reactions to the outside world is in control of their life. You alone can choose how to view and react to any situation. This chapter will provide examples of situations where you may find yourself ruminating on what you have done wrong to cause

the perceived problem and offer alternative thought processes to end the cycle of destructive thinking.

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TAKE A MOMENT TO JOT down a list of your triggers. Triggers are the situations in which you often find yourself worrying, overanalyzing, or procrastinating rather than acting. Some examples of common triggers are:

-Too much alone time. Too much free time can serve as an amusement park for negative thoughts.

-Lack of sleep. Maybe you find yourself making gross overgeneralizations when you haven't slept well.

-Poor diet. Eating diet that allows for nutritional deficiencies have been linked to reduced mindfulness and increased stress and anxiety.

Recognizing your triggers allows you to identify the potential for destructive behavior and take action to prevent it. Accept that you cannot control every moment of your day, but only you can control how you react. Take control of your emotions and let go of your inherent need to control everything else.

Will you choose to actively let go of frustration, worry, or anger? Or will you choose to lose sleep, harm relationships, and continue a life of overthinking? The choice is yours, and yours alone. Let's apply this concept to real-world situations.

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## SITUATION 1: TRAFFIC

Even the calmest of individuals can be prone to losing their cool in rush hour. Picture it: Your Monday morning commute. You have taken Chapter 1 to heart, and as such, you're well rested, your morning went smoothly, and the rest of your day will too. You have created an environment that welcomes actionable success. With a plan, nothing can ruin this day! Your favorite song is on the radio, and the coffee is at perfect temperature when, out of nowhere, a sports car speeds past, and swerves into your lane, effectively cutting you off. Fast braking action prevents an accident, but you are now a mess. Perfect coffee is now all over your previously impeccable outfit. This is the

moment where you have a choice to make. Will you spend the day dwelling on this incident or choose to move past it? Keep in mind that no one can make you feel anything. How you choose to react is the product of your decision making.

Reaction 1: Mutter rude comments under your breath for the rest of the drive getting more and more angry with the offender. Complain to anyone in the office who will listen about the event, showing off the coffee stains like a civil war battle wound. Spend the day distracted thinking of all the things you could or should have done to avoid being cut off by a bad driver. At the end of the day, your list for the day hasn't been finished and now you must drive home hoping someone doesn't cut you off again. At home, your partner makes the mistake of asking how your day went, and you're still upset by the jerk that cut you off, stained your clothes, caused you to not get your work done for the day, and you are surprised you made it home without another traffic incident, etc. Office Space said it best, "Sounds like someone has a case of the Mondays."

Reaction 2: Take a moment to feel your frustration. Then realize that there was nothing you could have done to control the situation, choose to let it go. Think of any reason to be grateful, you are indeed wearing your coffee but otherwise unscathed and choose to move forward. Go about business as usual, complete your list of tasks for the day, and go home feeling accomplished. When your partner asks about your day, you can honestly answer that you had a positive and productive day.

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## SITUATION 2: JOB INTERVIEW

You apply for a great job and are elated when contacted for an interview. For an overthinker, this is where the stress starts. Unwelcome thoughts start popping into your head at rapid speed. "I am not even remotely qualified for the job. What was I thinking of applying there? What if I make a fool of myself? What will I wear?" And so on. During the interview, you have well thought out answers for each question. Then, as you walk across the parking lot, doubt begins to creep in. Will you question your every word until regretting even applying for the job or accept that whatever happens, it's out of your control now?



Reaction 1: Spend hours rethinking your every answer. What were you thinking wearing those socks? The interviewer probably thinks you're a fraud. What could you have said instead? The interviewer made a face during one of your responses. Don't bother sending a thank you note because they aren't going to consider you for the position anyway. Lose sleep thinking and rethinking every detail of the entire interview and how you messed it up. When your spouse asks about the interview, give them a list of every reason you shouldn't have applied in the first place.

Reaction 2: Walk out of the interview with the knowledge that you had very good answers for the questions and posed appropriate questions about the position. Send a brief note to the interviewer to thank them for their time and move forward. Accept that the outcome is out of your control at this point.

### Situation 3: A Disagreement (Real or Imagined)

Every relationship experiences a disagreement, at times. Romantic, platonic, and professional relationships are subject to a difference in opinion from time to time. Your boss disagrees with your idea of a project. Maybe a friend isn't speaking to you, and you're not sure why. Your spouse bought red wine when you asked for white. Are you going to cling to the anger/disappointment or are you going to rise above? Once again, the choice is yours.

Reaction 1: Assume your boss thinks all of your ideas are unworthy. When asked for input in future meetings, offer none for fear of further rejection. Spend time thinking over every recent conversation and wonder what could you have said differently to make your boss like you more. Never call your friend to clear up the issue but spend hours playing the last conversation you had with him on an internal, endless loop. Wondering over and over what you did wrong without considering maybe their silence has nothing to do with you. Brood over dinner because the wine did not pair well with your seafood dish. Think about the wine all night and how much better it could have been. Wonder how you could have changed the conversation with your spouse to prevent this mistake from happening.

Reaction 2: Move forward with the original plan for the project. You presented the idea, it was rejected, move on. Nothing ventured, nothing gained as they say. Make the choice to not become personally offended or assign unwarranted worry to the issue. When asked for input, offer ideas, and recognize that your boss probably values your opinion even if they do not always agree. Reach out to your friend. If you did upset them, have a rational discussion and then move on with the knowledge that the conflict has been resolved. If their silence had nothing to do with you, accept this truth and move on. Thank your spouse for remembering the wine and accept that it was a mistake rather than a direct consequence for something you may have done wrong. Choose to move past the disagreement.

The first reactions described are filled with thoughts that are called cognitive distortions. Cognitive distortions are, as stated in Chapter 1, inaccurate assessments that encourage negative thinking or feelings. The good news is that you are not required to submit to the negativity. Another option is cognitive restructuring, as the second reactions emulate. Challenging your ideas and considering other interpretations is a way to actively prevent negative thoughts from taking over your mind.

In the traffic situation, catastrophizing and blaming are the prevalent types of distortions represented. Catastrophizing is assigning more significance to an event than it merits while blaming is the thought that someone made you feel a certain way. One act of inconsiderate behavior from another becomes the reason for your lack of productivity, negative feelings, and an unpleasant dinner conversation because they made you feel angry all day.

Instead, restructure your thinking to recognize that your reaction to the single event can drastically affect the rest of the day. Accept that the other driver made a mistake and leave it at that. Stop for a new cup of coffee, be grateful the coffee didn't cause burns and then turn your favorite song back on. Pick up where you left off on your list of things to do and get on with your day.

In the job interview situation, filtering and jumping to conclusions, are the forms of cognitive distortions. Filtering is focusing minor negative details while dismissing all positive portions of the event. The act of filtering causes you to jump to the conclusion that you have failed to represent yourself well and

will not be chosen for the job as a result. You have accepted your negative assumption as fact. Restructured thinking allows you to be grateful for the opportunity you were given to represent yourself to the best of your ability and patiently wait to learn the outcome. What's done is done, and the results are outside of your control.

The three disagreement scenarios allow for all forms of cognitive distortion. Filtering until only a fraction of your relationship is recognized, jumping to the conclusion that your boss hates your ideas and your friend is no longer your friend. Blaming your boss, friend, and spouse for making you feel negative about yourself. Catastrophizing the result of the wine mix up until convinced that the dinner that would have been perfect was entirely ruined. Instead, restructure your thinking to consider that your boss thought you had a great idea but was given strict instructions from their boss. When asked for future ideas, offer them, with the understanding that they would not ask if they didn't want your input. Actively consider that your friend isn't avoiding you. Perhaps, she has a large workload or isn't feeling well lately. What other reasons could your spouse have had for the mistaken wine purchase? Maybe he had a stressful day at work and was preoccupied at the store. Maybe he knows your usual go to is a red and thought he was doing a nice thing by choosing your favorite type.

At the end of the day, fully accepting that you are not in control of the world around you can save you from hours of anger, frustration, sadness, worry, self-doubt, and destructive overthinking that results from those feelings. No one can make you feel a certain way. Your feelings are one of the few things that you have absolute control over. Embrace the truth that you are in control of your feelings. Make the choice to feel good in less than ideal situations. Look at your list of trigger situations again. Practice telling yourself that you can only control your thoughts and actions in response to any event and cannot control the event itself. If you begin to worry about events out of your control repeat the words of Mr. Charles R. Swindoll, "Life is 10% what happens to me, and 90% how I react to it."



## Chapter 3: Face Your Fear

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FEAR IS OFTEN THE ROOT of overthinking and procrastination. Everyone experiences fear, but you can choose to face irrational fear and take steps to overcome it. Eliminating your fears requires you to identify the triggers. Does too much media inspire bad feelings toward the world and your place in it? Do you find that you compare yourself to models or mannequins when shopping? Do you love to swim but avoid the pool out of fear that people will think you are too skinny or not skinny enough? Are you afraid to ask the new guy at work to go get a drink in case he thinks you're weird? Does a news feature about unemployment in your state get interpreted by your brain as "There is no point in looking for a better job when everyone else is doing the same? I won't be good enough to beat out the rest."

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DO YOU CONTINUE TO live the same life you always have because fear prevents you from taking risks or making positive



changes? How can you stop the negative feedback loop in your head? Try replacing negative stories with positive ones. If watching the news or reading sad stories on the internet inspires fear of those bad things happening to you, stop putting yourself in that position. Spend that time on feel-good stories of success. The internet is loaded with good stories featuring an underdog who achieves something wonderful. People who fight the good fight. Stories that remind you of the good in the world and the possibility of positive events.

If fear of being laughed at prevents you from your desire to take up yoga, read stories about people who became yogi despite the odds. If fear of rejection stops you from asking that girl or guy out, read inspiring stories of couples that started in similar circumstances as yours. If fear of messing up prevents you from trying, you are held hostage by that fear. You must choose to break free from it.

Make yourself look at your worries realistically. You would like to make a career change but, after watching the news, you are too afraid to fill out job applications or send your resume to prospective employers. Consider this: What is the worst thing that can happen? Anytime you recognize yourself being prevented from acting due to fear, ask yourself that question. What is the worst thing that can happen? Write down your answers. Seeing the fear in print makes it easier for you to see the irrationality of it.

Real life examples include:

Fear: I want the job I saw posted, but they wouldn't hire me anyway.

Worst possible outcome: You fill out a job application and do not get a callback.

-The worst case is that you are no worse off than before. The cost of your effort was the time spent on the application.

Fear: I want my spouse to clean up more around the house, but if I ask them for help they might think that I'm incapable.

Worst possible outcome: They grumble for a few minutes while washing the dishes.

-Worst case is that they aren't thrilled to fulfill your request, but they do it because marriage is about partnership.

Fear: If I try a new haircut it might look bad on me, and people will stare.

Worst possible outcome: You get a haircut that you don't like.

-It will grow back out, and you will have the knowledge that the particular style wasn't for you.

Fear: If I eat at a new restaurant I might not like the food.

Worst possible outcome: You have a bad meal.

-In the grand scheme of your life, this should hardly prevent you from taking a chance.

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NOW, AS YOU CAN SEE those fears are ridiculous. They are not worth another moment of energy spent worrying or wondering what-if. Forget about the worst thing that could happen. Now, think of the best possible outcome. Keep that thought at the front of your mind instead. Remind yourself as often as necessary of the possibility of a positive outcome. Remind yourself that you cannot control everything, including the future, but you control your actions and reactions.

Stop fearful worry in its tracks. Actively decide to take the chance. Apply for the job because you have just as much chance as anyone else to get it. Tell your spouse what you need from them and be grateful that they understood your position. Get the haircut because there is a good chance you will look amazing afterward. Go to the restaurant and find yourself a new favorite dish.

Accept that sometimes you will make mistakes. Just as you cannot control every outcome, understand that every decision you make will not be the correct or the best one. And that is okay. To err is to be human. Try to look at the bigger picture. If you make a mistake, will you be upset about it in an hour, a day, a week, a month, or a year later? Odds are you won't even remember this mistake next month. You may have a regret or two, but do they haunt you as you feared they would?

You already know that preparing for success is a way to improve your environment and that only you can choose how to feel in any given situation. Fear is an emotion just as anger, happiness, frustration, and sadness are. You control how you feel.

Remember your mantra and choose confidence over fear. Set yourself up for success. Apply for the job you want and focus your energy on how great the opportunity would be.

When the company calls for an interview remind yourself that it would be a great opportunity and focus on that thought in a positive way. Choose your most flattering professional outfit for the interview. Picture the most confident person you have ever seen and emulate their behaviors. Stand tall and hold your head high as you enter the interview, offer a firm handshake, and smile. Fake it until you make it, as the saying goes. If you act confident long enough you will begin to genuinely feel confident.

If you find that fear is too great to overcome on your own, don't let the mental beatdown of yourself start. In instances where you can talk through your fear without obsessively worrying about it, consider confiding with a friend or loved one about your fear. Choose a friend who is trustworthy, realistic, positive, and honest. If someone with those qualities suggests that your fear is irrational, you are more likely to believe them.

Seek out factual information whenever possible. With the advent of the internet, we all forget to seek out professional opinions at times. When we don't feel well, there is a tendency to do a quick internet search to determine if medical treatment is necessary. Pick any symptom, do your search, and 20 minutes later you can convince you that your days are numbered. Imagine you have a friend who tells you they have concerns regarding their health. The nature of their concern is that they think they have a heart problem. A logical response would be to ask them what their doctor thinks. You ask them the question and are told they haven't seen a doctor because they fear the outcome.

This example shows how fear impacts an overthinker. The thoughts start out innocent enough and then it escalates into an unhealthy obsession.

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-I AM NOT FEELING SO great.

-Maybe I should go to the doctor.

-Check my symptoms online.

-Read that there is a very common cause for the symptoms.

- Zero in on the least likely cause.
- My grandpa had that unusual disease.
- What if I do to?
- Read that the disease is uncommon in those of your demographic.
- But, grandpa died of that.
- Read that you should seek medical attention.
- If I have that disease, the treatment will bankrupt me, and then I will die anyway.
- If I have the disease, I need the treatment.
- Grandpa died of that so I will too.
- If I go to the doctor and they find something horribly wrong I won't be able to work.
- If I can't work, I will lose my job.
- If I lose my job, I can't afford treatment.
- I'm going to die.

The fears have spiraled out of control because you just kept thinking about it. Worrying to the point that you have convinced yourself that death is imminent. Using the tools presented throughout this chapter, how will you face your fear?

Identify the fear. I don't feel well, and I am afraid I could be very sick. What is the worst that can happen? I could be very sick. What is the best possible outcome? I have a common ailment that can be easily treated. Decide to face your fear and make an appointment to see your physician. When you feel fearful of the appointment remind yourself that you are more likely than not, going to be just fine. Taking these steps to face your fear head on will prevent hours, days, or weeks of self-destructive overthinking and failure to address a problem. These tools can be applied to any situation where fear is paralyzing. You only have to decide how to proceed. The word decide comes from the Latin word, "decidere," which means to cut off. So, stand tall, be brave, and decide to cut off the other options. Choose a path and follow through. Focus intently on your goal and the plan to achieve it that you lose sight of your fears.



## Chapter 4: Physically Stop the Cycle

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**A**t this point, the focus has been mostly on changing your thoughts from cognitive distortions to more practical interpretations. A change in your thought patterns is critical in your mission to end overthinking. But, changing your thoughts doesn't just happen overnight. It will be a long process, and sometimes you will want to give in to your worried thoughts. To combat that backsliding, you can make a change in your physical habits.

Mindless activities such as watching T.V. or surfing the web leave too much of your mental focus free to worry. Shutting off a worrying mind can be as simple as “changing the channel” on your thoughts. Choose to do something else. Anything else. It is impossible for your brain to think hard about two things at once. Don't just sit there playing your negative thoughts over and over in your head. Act to turn your attention elsewhere.

There will always be times that you cannot stop your negative thoughts with cognitive restructuring, list making, and setting a plan in motion. In these moments, it is helpful to physically break

the cycle through activity. Constant worrying trains your brain to think about the worry more. Distracting your brain with other activities retrains it to stop the constant worrying.

Physically demanding exercise is a great way to take focus from your worries entirely, for a period of time that extends past when the workout ends. Take part in an activity you enjoy like a team sport, cardio class, running, biking, etc. You will soon find that you feel much more positive in general when using pent-up energy for sports rather than the obsessive overthinking you usually partake in.

With exercise, you focus your attention on the activity and look forward to a goal. The goal can be a win for your team, finishing the class, or running or biking X number of miles. At the end of the activity, you have feel-good endorphins flooding your brain, and you are feeling better than ever, both physically and mentally. It is hard to overthink when you feel that darn good. Many runners use their run to clear their mind, running for as long as it takes for the negative feelings or fear to dissipate. Some refer to this space as the void. Pushing themselves physically into a state of mindlessness. This level of physical activity is not for everyone, and I only mention it as one option of the many.

Studies show that regular exercise directly affects your brain to increase the volume of the prefrontal cortex and medial temporal cortex. These regions are the ones that control thinking and memory. Improving these particular portions of the brain can physically change your mind to stop the destructive overthinking. The relationship between your physical body and your mind has a great impact on how you think and feel. Nurturing this relationship is proven to improve the state of your thoughts and how you interact with the outside world.

There are indirect effects of exercise that further improve your thought patterns. Completing a fitness goal indirectly serves to boost self-esteem and confidence. Confident individuals with high self-esteem do not spend their time overthinking and worrying. Regular exercise is helpful in improving sleep and reducing stress levels, both of which are culprits in creating an environment for rumination. Any exercise reaps these rewards, so choose an activity that you enjoy most. Do not become a runner

if you hate to run. What do you think will happen if you choose an activity you dread?

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IT WOULD PROBABLY GO something like this:

-Alarm goes off, and your first thought is that you really do not feel like running.

-Turn off the alarm and go back to sleep.

-Wake up again and regret your sleepy decision.

-Feel like a failure when you see others out jogging during your commute.

-Rinse and repeat the feelings of regret and failure until they have escalated into “I will never be able to stick to running because I fail at everything I do” or some similar overgeneralization.

Choose an activity you enjoy or that you can learn to enjoy. Walking, yoga, swimming, gymnastics, kickboxing, Zumba, hiking, interpretive dance...it doesn't matter. Just exercise in any way that you like, whenever you would like.

There are two schools of thought about the best time to exercise:

Early morning exercise is best. The idea being that starting the day with a boost of feel good endorphins creates forward momentum to carry the good feelings throughout the day. Starting with a clear mind is the key for those who worry first thing in the morning. Individuals who tend to procrastinate benefit by early morning workout sessions because they do not have the time to come up with reasons for putting it off. I have heard people say that they get to the gym before they are fully awake, so they don't change their mind. There are benefits to AM workouts:

Consistency - There is less chance of distraction in the morning such as family gatherings.

Convenience - You can sleep in your exercise clothes and run right out the front door for a jog first thing in the morning. If finding time for exercise is a problem for you, this is a good method.



Domino Effect - Making healthy decisions in the morning can encourage good decision making throughout the day by “riding the high” if you will.

End of the workday is the second. These folks believe that physical activity at the end of the workday is effective in clearing the mind and eliminating that day’s stress to encourage a worry-free evening and physically put an end to the day. There are also benefits to PM workouts:

Accountability - It is much easier to find a workout buddy for evening sessions.

Stress Relief - At the end of a tough day, working out can clear your mind to prevent the vicious overthinking cycle from taking over.

Endurance and Strength – Some people are able to work out harder later in the day when fully awake and have eaten a few times.

If procrastination is your problem, morning workouts might be the way to go. If high-stress levels cause your excessive worrying and anxiety after work, evening workouts are probably your best bet. Ultimately, the effect can only be felt if you do it, so choose the time that fits best into your life and be consistent. Take the physical leap to improve your mind, and ultimately, your life. Use physical activity to force obsessive thoughts out of your mind and retrain your brain to improve interactions with yourself and others.

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ANOTHER TOOL IN YOUR ever-growing arsenal against overthinking are your hobbies. Reading, for instance, requires entirely too much brain power to be worrying or focusing on your failures. You can read fiction or get a double dose of distraction with nonfiction. Learning something new encourages positive feelings by providing the sense of accomplishment that follows grasping a new concept or understanding. You could even read celebrity gossip magazines if that happens to be your guilty pleasure. The content of the material isn’t as important, as long as it affects your thinking in a positive way.

Animals are fluffy, feathery, or scaly distractions. If you have pets, playing with them releases feel-good hormones in your

brain. A pet can be a fantastic distraction from excessive worrying and overthinking. You will both benefit from some mutual interaction. Some pets need stimulation and exercise as much as you do. Taking your dog for a walk or to the park distracts you from worry and strengthens your bond with the dog for a double dose of feel good. Shining a laser pointer and watching your cat attack the wall is more entertaining than replaying a less than pleasant conversation with your mother. Take a long, hard, look at how you look through your dog's eyes. He thinks you are the best human in the world. Try looking at yourself through his eyes to tune out negative feelings. The mental health benefits to having a pet are extensive. Get out there and play with your furry friend to reap the rewards.

If you don't have pets, visit a petting zoo or an animal shelter. For a regular dose of pet therapy, consider volunteering at a shelter to help out some critters in need. Doing so offers a sense of purpose for many individuals. Volunteering, of any kind, is a method of feeling good about yourself and putting your life in perspective. As discussed earlier, changing your perception of yourself reduces the need to obsess over any shortcomings you believe yourself to have. Cleaning up litter, working in a soup kitchen, or community youth programs are all excellent options to spend your time and physical energy.

For entertaining distractions, a good place to start is by checking your community calendar. Most cities have a calendar of events online. Festivals exist for anything imaginable. It doesn't matter what you are interested in. Jazz, pride, pumpkins, cranberries, trout, beer, wine, art, dogs, rabbits, cats, cucumbers, cars ... you name it, there is a festival for it somewhere in the world. Just get up and go for a dose of worry-free entertainment. Standing and staring at the biggest cucumber in the world doesn't bring to mind how bad traffic was this morning. Communities are going above and beyond to present opportunities for entertainment in recent years. Art shows, sporting events, concerts, and countless other activities are available to distract yourself. It is hard to be upset at a carnival, after all. The positive energy at community events is contagious. Cheering on your favorite team is so much more fun than sitting at home worrying about if your boss thought your comment in the morning meeting (three days ago) was stupid. Get out and have fun. Savor the freeing feelings of joy and carry them home with you. Reach for these fun memories

in the moments where worry threatens to take hold. Use these opportunities to meet positive, goal driven, people, to expand your circle of positive influences.

You don't need an extravagant event to distract yourself. Simply spend quality time with those who bring you joy. Playing games with friends, such as board games or interactive video games, is another way to occupy your mind in a positive way. Spending time with those we care about improves our state of mind. These activities will focus your mind on positive interaction which serves to distract from self-defeating worry. The positive interaction with those around you improves your relationships with them. As discussed in Chapter 1, we are all responsible for creating our environment. Your friends and family are also responsible for their environment. You are going to have more space in their life if your presence serves to offer positivity and good feelings. No one wants to listen to you worry all of the time. They have heard about your self-proclaimed, epic failure from 5 years ago and they do not see it as such.

Call an upbeat friend or family member to chat. Do not fall into the trap of talking about your worries. Have light-hearted conversation. Focus on listening instead of talking. Remember happy memories and set some plans to make new ones. Focus on the conversation you are having instead of the one in your head.

Go on a date with your partner or spouse. Make a "no worries" rule and obey it. Spend an entire evening, or day, on fun activities and talk about things other than your usual concerns. A round of putt-putt, the arcade, or a movie are excellent distractions and opportunities to use for conversation later.

If you want to stay home alone, that's completely fine, just be sure to break the cycle of mindless activities that allow space for overthinking. Do something that will occupy your mind in a positive way. Turn off the T.V. series you have watched all the way through multiple times and choose a movie you haven't seen before. If your overthinking is extra persistent, turn on a foreign film. It is physically impossible to worry and read subtitles at the same time. If you must play games on your phone, choose ones that are mentally stimulating, such as word puzzles or strategy games.

Listening to music has been proven to clear the mind and promote positive feelings. However, this method can go horribly awry if you choose tunes that dampen your spirits or have negative feelings associated with them. Do not listen to the song you and your ex used to dance to. This only leads to thoughts of failure, a past you cannot change, and a future you won't have. Instead, find music that you cannot be upset while listening to. For one person, it might be the Jackson 5. It would probably be physically impossible to think negative thoughts while singing "ABC" at the top of your lungs. Perhaps "Shake it Off" is a better option than "She Hates Me."

Take a minute to make a list of hobbies you would like to try. And then go try one. If you don't find the activity as relaxing as you expected, go try another one. Learning a new skill takes time, energy, and will help you stay away from habitual worrying. The success of learning a new skill gives you a boost of confidence that can overshadow negative self-perception. Accumulate a few of these successes and you will be able to view yourself as almost an entirely new confident person.

Even playing music is shown to have many benefits related to intelligent thought. Improving the way your brain thinks will help you to restructure your thoughts more easily. Playing a musical instrument uses your brain in a different way than other activities and therefore exercises the brain differently. The benefit of some piano lessons is much greater than just being able to play the piano. Replace piano with any instrument decided.

Some examples of these benefits are:

- Improved capacity for memory. Better memory means less worrying about forgetting something.
- Improved team skills. Playing music with others requires excellent teamwork skills. Thinking as a team reduces the perceived need for self-doubt and worry.
- Increased patience. Practicing a piece of music instills in you a knowledge that success requires practice. Practice requires patience and the understanding that you will fail many times before succeeding.

There are plenty of other hobbies that yield similar results. Common options are knitting, painting, learning a new language,

building models, and creative writing. Any activity that engages your hands and mind at the same time removes the capacity to focus on worries or fears. As with playing an instrument, learning any hobby requires the patience to fail and try again. If you mess up, just drop a few stitches and try again. Carry these feelings toward mistakes in the rest of your life, if you accidentally buy the wrong wine for dinner, just run to the store and try again. No need to think about every little mistake for hours, days, weeks, months, or even years. Walk into any hobby store to find a distraction that suits your budget, interest, and skill level.

Take the knowledge gained from Chapters 1 through 3 to assist you in choosing an activity. The activity you choose does not matter nearly as much as just doing one in general. Make yourself a list of things you would enjoy doing or going to. If you aren't interested in music, don't listen to "Shake it Off" on repeat because this guide suggested it. Don't buy a bike if you would rather go for a walk. If you are allergic to cats, it is not a great idea to volunteer at the animal shelter. The most important thing to consider is will this activity affect you in a positive way? Choosing an activity that makes you feel sad, worried, or anxious is counterproductive. If volunteering at a soup kitchen brings up bad memories of childhood homelessness, please choose another activity. Recognize that if an activity will be one of your personal triggers, you have control over whether or not you choose to do it.

Set a time limit on choosing your first activity to keep yourself from worrying too much about what you would like to do the most. Two minutes is ample time to pick. Face your fear of failure and take the leap. Decide to take up the ukulele if that is what appeals to you. Make a choice and then ask yourself, the worst thing that can happen is? If you sign up for a 6-week painting course, simply remind yourself that the worst thing that can happen is, you aren't a fan. And that's okay because you don't have to sign up again. That doesn't seem like a problem to spend hours mulling over. Remember the positive results that are possible. Maybe you will love painting and find a new favorite hobby. Maybe you will meet some good people and make more friends. Either way, you will be too busy painting a picture of a fruit bowl to dwell on other past or future events. Keep in mind that you wouldn't be having any more fun at home remembering how awful you feel about forgetting to feed the cat this morning.

Paint that bowl of fruit and forget about your mistake...keep in mind the cat forgot about it the moment you remembered and fed her. If the “victim” doesn’t remember the crime, find a way to set yourself free by forcing your brain to focus elsewhere.

The list of physical activities to engage your mind is endless. Try new things, meet new people, create good memories, and act to give your mind new things to think about. Find pleasure in the practice of learning new skills. Use mistakes to learn from and successes to build on. Find activities you excel at and use that knowledge to replace excessive thoughts of your failings. Do anything that allows you to escape the prison of your own mind and use the experiences to build confidence and increase your self-esteem. Learn to love the challenge of improving and stop dwelling on each misstep.



## Chapter 5: Practice Mindfulness Daily

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THE USE OF PHYSICAL activity to overcome your destructive overthinking and excessive worrying was discussed at great length in Chapter 4. To fully end the patterns of your overthinking, you must change your mind. This chapter will focus on mental exercises that, with daily practice, will assist you in using all of the tips learned in this book to transform your thinking and therefore your life.

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THE FIRST STEP TO MINDFULNESS is self-awareness. You've probably made many lists to this point. You have looked deep within yourself and have written down your triggers, your cognitive distortions and their restructured counterparts, your fears, the hobbies you already enjoy and the ones you want to try. Through these exercises, you have achieved increased self-awareness. You have begun to recognize what constant



rumination does to you physically and mentally and admitted that it makes you anxious, fearful, worried, and tired. Criticizing yourself all day, every day is exhausting. When you feel vulnerable to a round of overthinking, remind yourself to get back to the present. Remember, your brain cannot think about two things at once, so it cannot remember the past or worry about the future if you are focused on the present. Fully accept that you cannot control the past or the future, no matter how much time you spend thinking about either. Make it a point to firmly plant your mind in the present.

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**GIVE YOURSELF GENTLE** reminders throughout the day. Hang sticky notes all over your house and office if that is what it takes. A simple “it doesn’t matter” can end the snowballing of negative thoughts after a minor occurrence. Actively tell yourself that if you will not care tomorrow or next week, you are not obligated to spend time, or energy, caring right now. Using the traffic example from Chapter 2 again, do not focus on what could have been when the car cut you off. Stay focused on the present. Ask yourself if you will still care tomorrow. If the answer is yes, you need to start this book over... All kidding aside, in most situations you probably won’t care tomorrow. Do not waste the present with unnecessary upset. Wasting your present by dwelling on the past and fearing the future prevents you from living your own life.

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**PRACTICE GRATITUDE.** Every situation could be worse, and there are people in the world who suffer more than you do. Your circumstances, no matter how dire, will not change the truth in those statements. Some of the most inspiring individuals of all time suffered unimaginably and maintained a positive outlook. Anne Frank is the first that comes to mind. From her place of hiding during World War II, written within the pages of her diary that she believed people are good. If a Jewish individual hiding from the Nazi regime, could maintain a belief that people are inherently good, anyone is able to find a bright side.

We all know that one person in our network who seems to be happy all the time. You know the type. You probably find him to

be annoying and at least a little bit fake. He is always smiling and cheerfully greeting everyone he meets. Ask him why that is. His answer will, more likely than not, highlight the positive aspects of his life. This does not mean there are no negative aspects, it means that he has actively chosen to be grateful for the good.

Much overthinking involves focusing attention on the one negative moment out of the many positive ones. Think about how much time you can spend thinking about 100 positive moments if the one negative moment uses hours of your time. Make a list of everything you have to be grateful for and remind yourself of those things when negativity strikes.

Perhaps you always thought you would own a house at age 35, but here you are reading this in your one-bedroom apartment. Disappointment rises within you with every day that passes. You see “For Sale” signs in your neighborhood change to “Sold.” You scroll through pictures of your friend’s new houses on social media having jealous thoughts the whole time. The old you would spend hours remembering the money you spent on vacation a few years ago and how that could have been a down payment. Stop. Get back in the present and find something to be grateful about. There are many ideas that come to mind:

- The apartment is temperature controlled, so you are never cold in the winter or hot in the summer.

- You aren’t homeless. There are worse situations than yours.

- You have all of the great memories from that trip because it was one of the best weeks of your life.

You run into the same guy at the gym all the time. He’s stronger than you, and he drives your dream car. The old you would succumb to jealousy and escalate it into feelings of worthlessness. Jealousy is at the root of many negative thoughts. Be mindful of your negative thoughts and turn them into thoughts of gratitude.

- Since you have been working out together, you have noticed increased strength with his advice.

- Your current car is inexpensive to maintain, but your dream car probably wouldn’t be.

Practicing gratitude will require a lot of self-awareness, effort, and practice. Your mind feels hardwired to worry and obsessively

overthink. When you notice the old habits creeping in, take a moment to return to the present and find a reason to be grateful. Write a new list of things to be grateful for periodically to remind yourself of all of the good in your life. With regular practice, you will naturally notice the good in any situation instead of the bad.

Four full chapters in and meditation hasn't been mentioned yet. What kind of guide to stop overthinking is this? Meditation is the ultimate tool for practicing mindfulness. A relatively new practice in the Western world, it has been used for centuries in Eastern cultures to ease the mind. This practice is free and can be done literally anywhere you can sit down. Meditation is a simple act, but not an easy one. You have heard the term, but what does it actually mean to meditate?

To meditate is defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary as:

“to engage in mental exercise (such as concentration on one's breathing or repetition of a [mantra](#)) for the purpose of reaching a heightened level of spiritual awareness”

Meditate with intention each day. The practice is easier in the morning, without all of the conscious thought of the day filling your mind. There are benefits to evening meditation, however. As with physical exercise, choose to practice at a time that benefits you the most.

There are many different ways to meditate and many experts on the subject. For a beginner, who seeks to clear their mind of constant worrying and overthinking, just focus on mindfulness. To do this is complex only in its simplicity. Set a timer for however long you wish to practice. Many experts suggest beginners start with 5 minutes and add on from there if they wish. Sit somewhere comfortable for you and close your eyes. Focus on your breathing. Take deep breaths in through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Visualize a concern as you inhale and imagine it floating away on your exhale. Repeat this process until all of your worries have been cast away. End your session without any of your worries weighing you down. Take moments throughout the day to breathe mindfully if you feel worry taking over.

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WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS of meditation?

- Increased gray matter in the sensory portions of the brain after 8-weeks. A study done at Harvard links long-term meditation to maintaining gray matter, which diminishes with age.

- Improves memory and decision making.

- Decreased stress, depression, and anxiety.

Yoga is considered a physical exercise but many individuals who practice do so for the meditative effects. Meditative yoga serves to quiet an overactive mind, find true presence, and strengthen the mind-body connection on a spiritual level. Unlike traditional meditation, meditative yoga begins with focusing your gaze in a specific place. You can gaze at a tree, a houseplant, the flame of a candle, whatever you find that works for you. Direct your thoughts toward something specific like being in the present or your breathing. Maintain focus on that thought. It's okay if your mind wanders, that will happen from time to time. Don't get upset about it, just reign it back in. The purpose of the practice is to learn to be present and refocus your mind at any time, to free your headspace of negativity.

What are the benefits of yoga?

- Improved mind-body connection. Encourages living in the moment and gratitude for our abilities.

- Reduced stress and anxiety.

If you are the type of person who doesn't handle silence well, mantra meditation may be for you. This is a meditation that employs the chanting of a mantra as a way to free the mind of thought and attain mindfulness.

What are the benefits of chanting?

- Reduced anxiety and depression. This is linked to chemical reactions in the body to stabilize the nervous response.

- Reduces worries. Removing preoccupation with material items and our bodies limits our ability to worry.

- Encourages compassion. Chanting is believed to bring the practitioner closer to spiritual awakening. The meaning of this varies from one individual to the other.

Some individuals believe that a chanting practice places them on the same spiritual plane as God while others believe it attaches

them to the universe on a similar level.

The method you enact to practice mindfulness is, like everything else we've discussed, personal preference. Try any form that appeals to you and dismiss the others. The form and length of practice are not so important as doing it daily. Again, if you choose a practice and it doesn't work for you, over time, try another. There are numerous ways to meditate, chant, and do yoga. Try different types until you find your personal success.

How else can you stay present and mindful? Fully use your senses. We have five senses: taste, touch, sound, smell, and sight. A mind filled with worry mutes all of these senses. Practice mindfulness by noting what your senses are picking up at any moment. As you have heard many times before, stop and smell the roses.

Eating mindfully will leave you feeling more satisfied after a meal. Turn off any distractions and focus on your plate. Look at the food, note how colorful the vegetables are. Smell the food, what herbs can you detect? And when you take a bite, really taste the food completely. Take small bites and chew deliberately to savor the present moment. As with the meditative yoga, you are focusing intently on the item in front of you.

When you walk, take note of how your muscles feel as they contract and release. Moving mindfully means noting how you feel as you move. Pay attention to your movement and feel your feet touch the ground with each step. Staying in the moment even as you walk across a crowded room. Make each motion deliberate rather than just going through the motions. Feel your breath. Inhale and exhale intentionally. When you look at something, try to actually see it. Pay attention to colors and angles. Listen fully during a conversation. Hear the words you speak and those that are spoken to you. When you read, take in every word on the page. Feel the texture of your clothing.

Using all of these tools to stay firmly planted in the present will free you from worry. I will say again; a busy mind cannot worry. As idle hands are the Devil's playground, an idle mind is open to obsessive thoughts. Keep your mind with mindful observation to stave off your internal negativity. The daily practice of mindfulness is the key to living your life. Living within the confines of your own mind is not really living. Release negative

thoughts with the knowledge that you are not a casual observer in your life. You and only you can decide how to react to any situation including whether or not to act on your thoughts.

Studies have shown that it takes 21 days to form a habit. Continuous practice of mindfulness will change your life in this short period of time. Commit to making the changes to your mind and body presented within this book. Keep your mind planted firmly in the present to put a stop to destructive overthinking and excessive worrying, stop procrastinating, and start getting the results you seek.

# Conclusion

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**T**hanks for making it through to the end of *this guide*. I hope it was informative and provided you with the necessary tools to stop the vicious cycle of overthinking.

The next step is to use the examples throughout this book to identify areas of your life that they may apply. Deliberately practice using the tools provided to change your habits and your thought patterns. Remember your 5 P's to set yourself up for success by creating an environment that is conducive to success. Accept that you are not in control of everything that happens in your life, but that only you are in control of your reactions. Face your fears of failure, resist the paralysis of self-doubt, and act. Use physical and mental activity to change the channel on your negative thoughts and retrain your brain. Improve your physical self to improve your mental self and nurture the relationship between the two. Spend nervous energy by doing physical exercise whenever possible instead of in your thoughts. Be mindful and actively live in your present space. Use these tools to stop the destructive overthinking, procrastination, and worrying that prevents you from living your best life. Bask in the improvements to your personal and professional life by changing your life from one of worrying to one of action. Refer to the chapters of this book as needed for reminders to prevent relapsing into old ways.

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Thank you, and good luck!