

MENTAL HEALTH SKILLS & RECOVERY SERIES

STOP OVERTHINKING

A practical workbook for noticing thought loops, making room for uncertainty, and choosing a helpful next step.

SEE THE LOOP / SLOW THE BODY / OBSERVE / PROCEED

Reflect at your own pace. One word is enough to begin.

For individuals, clinicians, and crisis-support settings

2026 EDITION

Your safety comes first

Please read before starting.

A NOTE ABOUT YOUR WELL-BEING

This workbook is for education and coping-skill practice. It does not replace a mental health assessment, therapy, medical care, or an individualized safety plan. You may pause, skip, or ask a staff member to help at any time.

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

If you feel overwhelmed, are thinking about suicide, or need emotional crisis support in the United States, call or text 988. If someone is in immediate danger or there is a life-threatening emergency, call 911. If you are at a clinic, tell staff directly that you need immediate help.

You do not need to finish an exercise before getting help. If worrying involves an actual threat or immediate safety concern, prioritize getting safe and seeking support rather than trying to challenge the thought.

How to use this workbook

Short answers, checkmarks, or quiet reflection all count.

WHAT IS OVERTHINKING?

Overthinking often means repeatedly reviewing the past, predicting the future, or searching for certainty without reaching a useful next step. The aim is not to stop thinking. It is to notice unhelpful loops and respond with more flexibility.

THE FOUR-STEP STOP PRACTICE

S - See the loop. T - Take a breath or slow your body. O - Observe facts, feelings, and stories. P - Proceed with one grounded action. This is a memory aid for coping skills, not a stand-alone treatment.

Try it in your own way:

☐ During a difficult moment

☐ After a thought loop

☐ Before a stressful event

☐ With a counselor or support person

S - See the loop

Notice the pattern without blaming yourself.

NOTICE AND NAME

Try saying: "I am replaying the same conversation," or "I am predicting the worst." Naming a loop can help you decide what to do next without arguing with every thought.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Replaying the past | ☐ Predicting the future |
| ☐ Mind-reading or assumptions | ☐ Searching for reassurance |
| ☐ Perfection or "what if" thinking | ☐ Self-criticism or regret |

My most familiar thought loop is:

A phrase that helps me recognize it:

T - Take a breath or slow the body

Choose a comfortable way to steady yourself.

KEEP IT OPTIONAL

If breathing exercises make you dizzy, uncomfortable, or more aware of distress, skip them. You could instead notice your feet, look around the room, hold a familiar object, or shift your posture.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Breathe gently at my own pace | ☐ Feel my feet or chair |
| ☐ Unclench jaw and hands | ☐ Sip water if available |
| ☐ Look around and name colors | ☐ Ask for a quiet moment |

The most comfortable grounding option for me is:

What I notice after trying it:

O - Observe facts, feelings, and stories

Explore uncertainty without dismissing real concerns.

LOOK AT THE WHOLE PICTURE

Ask: What do I know? What am I guessing? What feelings are present? A feared event may be possible without being certain. Sometimes the concern is real and needs action, support, or protection.

What I know from direct evidence:

What my mind is predicting or assuming:

Another possibility, or something I do not know yet:

P - Proceed with one grounded action

Choose what is useful, not what guarantees certainty.

A SMALL STEP IS ENOUGH

You might ask one question, return to a task, rest, seek support, or give yourself permission to leave a thought unfinished. If immediate safety is at risk, getting help is the next step.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Do one manageable task | ☐ Ask a clear question |
| ☐ Wait before checking again | ☐ Take a break or rest |
| ☐ Speak to someone supportive | ☐ Address a real safety concern |

My smallest useful next step:

When and how I will try it:

A quick example

Not every unanswered message needs an immediate explanation.

Situation

A friend has not replied to a message.

Thought loop

"They must be upset with me. Did I do something wrong?"

Facts

I sent a message. I have not heard back. I do not know why.

Balanced view

There are several possible reasons. I can tolerate not knowing for now.

Next step

I will put down my phone for a while and return to what I was doing.

Worksheet 1 - My overthinking map

Identify themes you recognize.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ I replay the past | ☐ I predict future problems |
| ☐ I assume what others think | ☐ I search for perfect answers |
| ☐ I postpone decisions | ☐ I keep checking or seeking reassurance |
| ☐ I focus on worst-case outcomes | ☐ I criticize myself |

Situations that commonly start my thought loops:

The pattern I would most like to practice changing:

Worksheet 2 - See the loop

Describe the thought without needing to solve it now.

What happened just before the loop began?

What thought keeps repeating?

How intense does the thought feel right now? (0-10)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My name for this loop: “I am noticing ...”

Worksheet 3 - Slow the body

Try one skill, then notice your experience.

☐ Tense jaw or shoulders

☐ Restlessness

☐ Stomach discomfort

☐ Fast heartbeat

☐ Shallow breathing

☐ Feeling numb or disconnected

What am I noticing in my body?

What gentle, comfortable action will I try?

Did anything change? It is okay if not.

Worksheet 4 - Facts and stories

Consider feelings and facts together.

Facts I have evidence for:

Predictions, assumptions, or stories:

A more balanced, compassionate possibility:

Worksheet 5 - Grounded action

Focus on one helpful choice.

☐ Wait without checking

☐ Ask for support

☐ Rest or care for my body

☐ Complete one small task

☐ Set a respectful boundary

☐ Take action about a real problem

The smallest useful action I can take:

When I will try it:

If the loop returns, I can:

Worksheet 6 - Thought loop breaker

Use this shorter page when you need a quick reset.

My repeating thought is:

One fact I know:

What I cannot control right now:

What I can control right now:

My next helpful step:

Worksheet 7 - Worry time plan

An optional strategy for everyday worries.

SET ASIDE WORRY TIME

Some people find it useful to schedule a short period to write down worries, identify solvable problems, and return to present activities outside that period. Skip this strategy if it makes your distress worse.

When and for how long I may try worry time:

Worries I will save to revisit:

What I will do when the scheduled time ends:

Worksheet 8 - Reality check

Practice being curious rather than certain.

What supports my thought?

What information does not support it?

What remains unknown?

What realistic conclusion can I hold for now?

Worksheet 9 - Let it be unfinished

You may be able to move forward without a final answer.

ALLOW ROOM FOR UNCERTAINTY

For some non-urgent worries, it may help to practice leaving a thought unresolved. This is not an instruction to ignore danger, discrimination, abuse, or a genuine need for assistance.

The non-urgent thought I can leave unfinished:

What uncertainty feels hardest to allow:

What I want to return my attention to:

Worksheet 10 - After-action reflection

Review when you feel ready.

What started the loop?

What did I do that kept it going?

What helped me respond differently?

What will I practice next time?

Worksheet 11 - Seven-day practice tracker

Small attempts matter, even when the loop does not stop.

For each day, record the trigger and the skill or action you tried.

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

DAY 4

DAY 5

DAY 6

DAY 7

One pattern or small improvement I noticed:

My personal STOP overthinking plan

Keep these reminders available for future moments.

My most common warning sign:

My strongest grounding or slowing tool:

My balanced reminder phrase:

One practical action that helps:

A person or service I can contact for support:

Credits and additional resources

Publication information

AUTHOR & PUBLICATION

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ADDITIONAL MENTAL HEALTH WORKBOOKS

<https://bodhilifebalance.com/mental-health-workbooks>

Further workbook resources can be found at the website above.

Selected background resources

NIMH: Caring for Your Mental Health - [nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/caring-for-your-mental-health](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/caring-for-your-mental-health)

NHS: Generalised anxiety disorder in adults - [nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/generalised-anxiety-disorder/](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/generalised-anxiety-disorder/)

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline - 988lifeline.org