

## 6 Tips to Stop Over-thinking

**Source:** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-mentally-strong-people-dont-do/201602/6-tips-stop-overthinking>

Whether they beat themselves up over a mistake they made yesterday or fret about how they're going to succeed tomorrow, overthinkers are plagued by distressing thoughts—and their inability to get out of their own heads leaves them in a state of constant anguish.

While everyone overthinks things occasionally, some people just can't ever seem to quiet the constant barrage of thoughts. Their inner monologue includes two destructive thought patterns—ruminating and worrying.

Overthinkers don't just use words to contemplate their lives. Sometimes, they conjure up images, too. They may envision their car going off the road or replay a distressing event in their minds like a movie. Either way, their tendency to overthink everything holds them back from doing something productive.

### The Dangers Of Overthinking

Thinking too much about things isn't just a nuisance; it can take a serious toll on your well-being. Research finds that dwelling on your shortcomings, mistakes, and problems increases your risk of mental-health problems. And as your mental health declines, your tendency to ruminate increases, leading to a vicious cycle that is hard to break.

Studies also show that overthinking leads to serious emotional distress. To escape that distress, many overthinkers resort to unhealthy coping strategies, such as alcohol or food.

If you're an overthinker, you likely already know you can't sleep when your mind won't shut off. Studies confirm this, finding that rumination and worry lead to fewer hours of sleep and poorer sleep quality.

### How To Stop Overthinking

Putting an end to rehashing, second-guessing, and catastrophic predictions is easier said than done. But with consistent practice, you can limit your negative thinking patterns:

#### 1. Notice When You're Thinking Too Much

Awareness is the first step in putting an end to overthinking. Start paying attention to the way you think. When you notice yourself replaying events in your mind over and over, or worrying about things you can't control, acknowledge that your thoughts aren't productive.

#### 2. Challenge Your Thoughts

It's easy to get carried away with negative thoughts. Before you conclude that calling in sick is going to get you fired, or that forgetting one deadline is going to cause you to become homeless, acknowledge that your thoughts may be exaggeratedly negative. Learn to recognize and replace thinking errors before they work you into a complete frenzy.

### 3. Keep The Focus On Active Problem-Solving

Dwelling on your problems isn't helpful but looking for solutions is. Ask yourself what steps you can take to learn from a mistake or avoid a future problem. Instead of asking why something happened, ask yourself what you can do about it.

### 4. Schedule Time For Reflection

Stewing on problems for long periods of time isn't productive, but brief reflection can be helpful. Thinking about how you could do things differently or recognizing potential pitfalls to a plan, for example, can help you do better in the future. Incorporate 20 minutes of "thinking time" into your daily schedule. During this time, let yourself worry, ruminate, or mull over whatever you want. Then, when the time is up, move onto something more productive. When you notice yourself overthinking things outside of your scheduled time, remind yourself that you'll think about it later.

### 5. Practice Mindfulness

It's impossible to rehash yesterday or worry about tomorrow when you're living in the present. Commit to becoming more aware of the here and now. Mindfulness takes practice, like any other skill, but over time, it can decrease overthinking.

### 6. Change The Channel

Telling yourself to stop thinking about something can backfire. The more you try to avoid the thought from entering your brain, the more likely it is to keep popping up. Busying yourself with an activity is the best way to change the channel. Exercise, engage in conversation on a completely different subject or get working on a project that will distract your mind from a barrage of negative thoughts.