KESTON SCHOOL

MIND & EMOTIONS · FREE SAMPLE

Stop Overthinking

Quiet the mental loops, decide faster and get back to your life

CHAPTER 1 + WORKBOOK SECTION

BEFORE YOU START

How to use this book

By the last page you will be able to spot an overthinking loop, interrupt it within minutes and turn worry into a decision or an action.

1. Read one chapter at a time. Each one gives you a single idea and a single action.
2. Open the Stop Overthinking Workbook and complete the matching section while the chapter is fresh.
3. Do the “Try this” action within seven days. Reading changes what you know; the action changes what you do.
4. Finish with the checklist in chapter 12 and come back to it whenever you slip.

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CHAPTER 1

Caught in the Loop

Overthinking is not deep thinking. It is the same few thoughts on repeat, and this chapter helps you catch your own loops.

It is 11:40 p.m. You are lying in bed, tired, and your mind is wide awake. It is replaying the meeting from this afternoon: the comment you made, the pause that followed, the look on your manager's face. Was it a bad comment? Did it sound arrogant? Should you send a message tomorrow to explain? You run through the scene again. Then again. By 1 a.m. you have not solved anything, but you have rehearsed three versions of an apology email and imagined being let go.

In the morning, your manager says, "Great point yesterday, by the way."

If you recognize yourself here, you are not alone. Overthinking is one of the most common mental habits in busy, conscientious people. It often comes with a kind of pride: "I just care a lot." "I like to think things through." But there is a big difference between thinking something through and thinking it in circles.

What overthinking actually is

Overthinking is repetitive thinking about the same topic that does not lead to a decision, an action or a new understanding. You go round and round, often with a growing sense of unease, but you do not move forward.

It usually has three features:

1. **Repetition.** The same thoughts, questions or scenes come back again and again.
2. **No progress.** You do not reach a conclusion or take a step, even after a long time.
3. **Unpleasant feelings.** The thinking makes you more anxious, sad or tense, not less.

Thinking about a problem until you solve it is useful. Thinking about it for the fifth hour without new information is a loop.

The two main loops

Most overthinking falls into one of two patterns.

Replaying the past. You go over things that already happened: a conversation, a mistake, a decision, something you said or did not say. The questions sound like “Why did I…?” “What did they mean by…?” “What if I had…?” This is often called rumination.

Rehearsing the future. You run through things that might happen: a difficult meeting, a health worry, a decision, a relationship problem. The questions sound like “What if…?” “What will I do if…?” “How will I cope if…?” This is usually called worry.

Many overthinkers do both, switching between them depending on the day. Knowing which loop you are in helps, because each one responds to slightly different tools.

> **Key idea:** Overthinking feels like problem-solving, but it is a loop. Real problem-solving ends in a decision or an action.

Where loops show up

Overthinking tends to appear in predictable places:

- After social situations, replaying what you said and how people reacted.
- Before decisions, both large ones like a job change and small ones like what to write in a message.
- At night, when there is nothing else to fill your attention.
- Around uncertainty: waiting for test results, a reply, feedback or a decision someone else is making.
- When you are tired, stressed or alone with your thoughts for long periods.

The topics vary, but the pattern is the same. Your mind grabs onto something that feels unfinished and keeps turning it over.

Why “just stop thinking about it” fails

Well-meaning friends often say, “Just stop thinking about it.” If only it were that easy. Trying to push a thought away tends to make it come back more often, the way trying not to think of a specific song guarantees it will play in your head.

The approach in this book is different. Instead of fighting thoughts, you will learn to notice loops early, give your worries a place and a time, turn questions into decisions, and build habits that leave less room for loops in the first place. These tools work with your mind rather than against it.

Overthinking is a habit, not a trait

It is tempting to see overthinking as part of your personality: “I am just an overthinker.” But it is more useful to see it as a habit, a pattern your mind has practiced many times. Habits are strengthened by repetition, and they can be weakened the same way.

Every time you follow a loop all the way through, you practice it. Every time you notice it and step out, you practice something new. You do not need to change who you are. You need to change what you practice, a little at a time, until the new pattern becomes the easier one.

A note on when to get help

Everyone overthinks sometimes. For some people, though, repetitive worry or dark thoughts become constant, intense or overwhelming, and start to interfere with sleep, work or relationships for weeks at a time. If that sounds like you, talking to a doctor or a qualified mental health professional is a sensible step, not a sign of weakness. This book can be used alongside professional support, but it is not a replacement for it.

Try this

For the next seven days, keep a simple Loop Log. Each time you notice yourself going over the same thought several times, write down:

1. The topic of the loop, in a few words.
2. Whether it is replaying the past or rehearsing the future.
3. Roughly how long it lasted.
4. Where you were and what you were doing when it started.

Do not try to stop the loops yet. Just catch them. At the end of the week, look for patterns. Which topics come up most? What time of day? Which situations trigger them?

In the next chapter, we look at why your mind replays things so persistently, and why that understanding makes the loops easier to break.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Overthinking is repetitive thinking that does not lead to action.
- Most loops fall into two types - replaying the past or rehearsing the future.
- Noticing your loops is the first and most important step.

→ Workbook, section 1

01 Caught in the Loop

Catch your loops for seven days before you try to stop them.

FILL IN

My Loop Log

Topic	Past or future?	How long	Where / when it started

The topics that come up most often:

The time of day and situations that trigger my loops:

YOUR NEXT STEP

Want the whole book?

You just read chapter 1 of Stop Overthinking and tried the first workbook section. The full e-book has 12 chapters, a complete workbook and a final checklist. Here is everything inside:

01 Caught in the Loop

02 Why Your Mind Replays

03 The Price of Thinking Too Much

04 Thinking Versus Overthinking

05 Name It and Notice

06 The Worry Window

07 Decide and Move On

08 Common Overthinking Traps

09 When the Loop Will Not Stop

10 A Quieter Daily Routine

11 A Mind That Trusts Itself

12 Mistakes & Checklist

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