

5 Must Know Techniques to
Master Overthinking and
Stopping Negative Self-Talk



Happy Life
Coaching

How much time do you spend worrying about something that hasn't even happened yet? Or you are overthinking something that happened a long time ago, something that's in the past and can no longer be changed? How many times you spend hours, days, weeks or even longer overthinking something? How many times have you created false scenarios in your head and made assumptions, assumptions that have overtime proven to be false and incorrect? When we overthink something, not only it has a negative impact on our overall wellbeing, but it's another way we steal happiness from ourselves.

Overthinking can seem like the biggest problem, one that's difficult to solve, but the good news is that it's just a bad habit. And like with all bad habits, it can be broken.

There are different ways and different things people overthink. We will focus on two different types which are overthinking a specific situation and overthinking either about the past or the future.



Overthinking a specific situation

Imagine you are dating someone; you've had few lovely dates but suddenly you notice a red flag. So, what do you do in that situation? You really like this person and they seemed picture perfect right until that moment. So, you end up with a never-ending internal dialogue. What should I do? Should I end it with them? But that would be absurd, they've been so nice and now they make one mistake and I want to quit already? What does that say about me? Does that mean I'm emotionally unavailable? What if it's a misunderstanding? What if I interpreted that situation completely incorrectly? Should I bring it up to them? Should I even mention it? No, no I can't mention it. If I mention it, I might come across as crazy. But what should I do then? I want to carry on seeing them. But it's a red flag, I told myself to pay attention to red flags, especially because of what happened last time." And then you start thinking about the last time and you are trapped, and the problem never gets resolved.

In these kinds of situations, we overthink because there is a problem that needs to be resolved, and until we find a solution we tend to overthink. This can be problematic because overthinking doesn't necessarily mean that the solution will come, it often means that we're just creating more problems for ourselves. In this case, you need to find a solution. The reason why overthinking will not provide you with a solution straight away is because it all takes place in our mind and it's very disorganised. It

is true that we have thoughts and emotions, and we need to get them out of our system, however overthinking is not the way to do it because as I said, it will more likely create more problems than solutions.

So, what can you do? I would highly encourage you to either speak to a friend or journal about it. If you do decide to speak to someone about your problems don't look for advice or guidance or counsel. Simply see it as a way to get your thoughts organised. Voicing your thoughts and emotions will allow you to organise them. If you only keep the thoughts in your mind, nothing will leave you, on the contrary, it will most likely just create more problems. Overthinking is a domino effect, you start thinking one thought, which will lead to countless of different thoughts, all of which you will end up overthinking. Getting those thoughts out and getting them organised will allow you to pinpoint exactly what the problem is. Once that has been done you will be able to find solutions quicker and it will be more effective. Once you've found a solution and you've made a decision, anytime you start overthinking the situation again you can simply go back to the decision that you've already made.

Overthinking the past

Overthinking situation from our past means that there are emotions that are trapped and haven't yet been processed. We think anywhere between 60,000 to 80,000 thoughts a day and 80% to 90% of them are repetitive, and some of those thoughts have been repeated over months, years, if not decades. I would like to encourage you to pay attention to your thoughts. What are the most common thoughts that you think on daily basis? It would be very handy for you to have a journal or simply open a notepad in your phone, and whenever you notice any thoughts that are repetitive write them down and notice the patterns. Once you notice the patterns you can start with a similar approach mentioned earlier. It's important to get the emotions and thoughts out of our system. You can speak to a friend, you can journal about it, you can seek therapy, do anything that you can to work through this. If you would like to do this on your own that's absolutely fine. And if you don't like writing you can record a video of yourself, you can send yourself voice notes, do anything that you need to do to process what has happened to you, or anything that you've done or any other significant experience that you've had that you've been overthinking. This is the time where you can implement everything that you've learned in the first module. Welcome the present moment and live in the now. Once you start focusing on the present moment it will take the power away from your overthinking and repetitive thoughts. Once more I would like to bring your attention to the fact that this is a journey, and it might take some time for you to stay in the present moment for a long period of time but that's okay. This isn't a competition. It's simply a new habit that you are learning, and I would like to encourage you to be compassionate with yourself, because one day you might have a very good day where you will very rarely dwell on the past but the next day you might find yourself being stuck in the past again. And that's all part of the journey and that's all OK. Remember don't judge the moment and don't judge yourself. Simply allow them to enter and know that you're just riding a wave which will slowly disappear.

Overthinking Negative Beliefs

Do you speak negatively to yourself? Do you self-sabotage? Is the person that brings you down the most you? We all do this or have done this at some point in our lives. Understand that if you do this, your thoughts came from someone else. Maybe they came from your parents, siblings, teachers, peers, but they didn't come from you. Think about it. When is the last time you've seen a 4-year-old child speak negatively to themselves? You didn't.

The point is that we learn this from others. You may not remember how or when this happened to you. It is possible that it happened over a period, during various events. You don't need to fully understand how your negative self-talk started, but simply understand that they are not yours, they didn't come from you. This is something you have learned elsewhere and it's your responsibility to

unlearn it. It starts with self-awareness. Simply notice the negative self-talk as soon as it arises. Often, we don't even realise how negative our thoughts are, so pay attention.

If you want to find out where your negative thoughts come from, you can write down your most common negative thoughts. Once you've done this, assign an emotion to each thought. If you often think "I'm not good enough", think about how it makes you feel. Shame? Fear? Self-loath? Label it and then try to feel it. This process isn't easy, however discomfort is the key to healing. It's just like going to the gym, it's not easy, it's far from pain-free, but it's what needs to be done if you want to see changes. Once you have the emotion, close your eyes, and feel it. Feel it as hard as you can. Then, think of a time when you first felt that emotion. You may not find out straight away, but the memory will eventually come to you. Once you understand where a negative thought comes from, you can remind yourself of this once it arises. For example, if you felt neglected as a child because your parents worked long hours, and now you feel fear whenever someone gets too close to you, you can remind yourself of this the next time you feel afraid. This will not get rid of your fear, however it will allow you to understand your emotions, which will allow you to approach the situation differently. You can remind yourself that what you're feeling is just a protective blanket, because that's what you are subconsciously trying to do, protect yourself.

Now I would like to introduce you to some tips and techniques that will allow you to get overthinking under control.



Techniques and exercises for Overthinking

The Balloon Technique

Imagine the thought or a situation you are overthinking. Have a visual film in your mind of whatever it is you are overthinking. Now picture that film being stuffed into a balloon. Now imagine yourself holding that balloon. Take a couple of deep breaths and imagine that you're letting go of the balloon which symbolises you letting go of the thoughts. Keep focusing on your breath, then simply smile and focus on something positive in your life. This can also help with events that you have been overthinking for years, however if you do want to use this technique for traumas, try using a physical balloon. Actually do it, instead of just imaging it.



Ask yourself these questions:

I would like to introduce you to a couple of questions that you can ask yourself. This is work of Byron Katie and she wrote a whole book dedicated to these questions and how she had her own awakening simply thanks to these questions.

1. Is it true? (i.e. is this thought true?)
2. Can you absolutely know that it's true? (i.e. can I absolutely know this thought is true?)
3. How do you react when you believe that thought?
4. Who would you be without that thought?

This works especially well when it comes to making assumptions. For example, you notice that your significant other is messaging someone else, and you start making assumptions about what that means. You start assuming that they are no longer in love with you, that they're being unfaithful even before addressing the situation and asking questions, you've created a whole story based on the one small piece of information, and of course sometimes that means that your partner may be unfaithful, however there are so many other people they could be messaging, for example their co-workers or a friend or they might be planning a surprise for you. In these situations, asking these questions will allow you to deal with the situation in a calmly manner.

For example, your assumption in this scenario would be my partner cheating on me, so you would ask yourself "is it true" and "can I absolutely know it's true". The answer would be no, because no you cannot know it's true.

"How do I react when I believe that this is true"? you get jealous, you get frustrated, you get angry, and all the negative emotions have a significant impact on your happiness, well-being, and your whole body in general.

And finally, "who would I be without that thought"? You would be someone that trusts your partner, you would be secure and confident.

This doesn't mean that you shouldn't talk to your partner about your concerns. You absolutely can ask questions in a nice way about who is it that they are messaging, however you would be asking questions instead of making assumptions or accusations. Which is a better way of handling things because if we change the scenario and it was you who was messaging other people and it would be completely innocent, imagine your partner came to you and started accusing you of things that are not true.

Our Energy Flows Where Our Attention Goes

Our energy flows where our attention goes, so if your attention is entirely focused on the repetitive thoughts, then that's where your energy will flow. As I've said before, it's important to get those emotions and thoughts out of your system to get them organised. Once you've done that you can focus your energy on something else. You can have a list of things that you can do that make you happy. For example reading or listening to podcasts, going out for a walk, listening to music, dancing, you can call a friend and have a nice catch up, you can go shopping, you can go to the gym, do something that will distract you, you can work, you can be creative, something that you're passionate about, something that will make you happy and something that will benefit you. Write a list of activities that make you happy and turn to that list once you feel overwhelmed with overthinking.



Gratitude

My favourite thing to focus on whenever I'm feeling like I am overthinking something and I want to distract myself, is a gratitude exercise. The gratitude exercise is so powerful itself. There was a study done on couple of 80-year-olds and this exercise has turned lifelong pessimists into natural optimists just in three weeks. All they did was write down three things that were very grateful for. So, what are you grateful for? It doesn't have to be big; it can be the smallest of things. Whenever I do the gratitude exercise, I think of how I start my day. The first thing I do in the morning is brush my teeth. Which reminds that I have access to certain necessities like a toothbrush, because there are so many people in the world that don't have these simple things, like toothbrushes and toothpaste. I then imagine what my life would be like if I didn't have these basic things. My breath would be smelly, it would be so unpleasant, there would be things on my teeth which is so uncomfortable, I would feel very insecure if I was talking to people, especially after eating a very garlicky meal. And in that moment, I can really feel how lucky I am and how even this simple thing that we have in life can make a huge difference. But because we are used to it and we don't think about what life would be like if we didn't have those things, not until we go somewhere and we realise that we forgot to pack a toothbrush, only then do we realise how fortunate we are to have these things and how necessary they are for comfort.

Name your voice

This works well with negative self-talk. Simply name your negative thoughts. Create a fictional character, give them a name, a voice, a personality, and whenever you have any negative thoughts, imagine that it's the character, it's not you. Remember, the limiting beliefs have come from someone else, they are not yours. Creating a character and assigning each negative thought to it will allow you to detach yourself from them. It's the importance and meaning that we assign to these thoughts that give them power. We think that our thoughts are the ultimate truth, however this is a lie. Understand that your thoughts are thoughts. They are not facts. They don't have to mean anything. Create that character in your mind and know that its strongest personality trait is that the character is a liar, so whenever you notice a negative thought, simply know that it's a lie.

Another trick a love to use is to say a negative thought out loud in the funniest voice you can possibly do. Turn your negative self-beliefs into a joke. Make yourself laugh. Lighten up the mood. This is a great way of breaking that pattern of negative beliefs because laughter takes the power away from them.

I know this is easier said than done, believe me I do. However, your mind can either be your best friend or your worst enemy, which is why it's essential for you to learn how to use it and guide it. This will may take some time, this may not be an easy fix, but it will work if you are persistent and consistent. Remember you are not your thoughts. Your thoughts are your thoughts, they don't form who you are, they don't define who you are, and they don't control you until you let them. So, whenever you notice a thought that you don't want, do NOT try to push it away. Resistance creates persistence. So simply notice it, don't judge it, don't dwell on it, don't assign any meaning to it. Notice it, use one of the techniques above, and let go. Overtime, letting go will become easier and easier. I promise.

You got this.