

How to Stop *Overthinking*

The same worry on its fifth lap is not analysis, it is a loop. One question splits every loop in two: either the worry earns a next step, or it gets shown the door.



1 CATCH THE LOOP

2 ANSWER ONE QUESTION

3 DO WHAT THE ARROW SAYS

Caught in a loop?

Same thought, third lap, nothing new

Can you act on it in the next 48 hours?

Real action, not more research or reassurance

YES

NO

Decide the smallest next step

One sentence. Something a hand can do.

Do it now or give it a calendar slot

Under 5 minutes? Do it now. Longer? Book it.

Loop returns? Point to the calendar

Already handled. Thursday, 6pm. Not now.

That's rumination, not problem-solving

No decision to make means nothing to solve

Interrupt the loop

Move your body for 2 minutes

Stairs, stretching, a lap around the block

Ground with 5-4-3-2-1

5 see, 4 touch, 3 hear, 2 smell, 1 taste

Book a worry window at 7pm

15 minutes to worry on purpose, then stop

IF YOU KEEP ONE LINE

You do not have to stop the thought. You only have to **stop feeding it another lap** - give it a job, a time slot, or an exit.

REALITY CHECK

Thinking vs solving

Solving moves: it ends with a next step you could hand to a friend.
Overthinking circles: after round two it produces nothing you did not already know. Judge the output, not the effort.

STOP RULE

The 2-round rule

Give any worry two honest passes. If the second pass added nothing new, the twelfth will not either - repetition raises anxiety, not answers. Write down what you have and close the tab.

SLEEP RULE

Night rule

No verdicts after 22:00. A tired brain scores every problem as bigger and every option as worse. If it still matters at breakfast, it gets daylight attention. The 3am brain lies.