



STOP THINKING NEGATIVE

A 7-DAY SYSTEM TO QUIET YOUR
OVERTHINKING MIND AND GET YOUR PEACE BACK

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A NOTE BEFORE YOU START

Welcome

If you picked this up, chances are you know exactly what it feels like to lie awake replaying a conversation for the fifth time, or to spiral through every possible way tomorrow could go wrong before it's even happened. You're not broken, and you're not "too much." Your brain is doing something it thinks is helpful. It's just gotten stuck in the on position.

This guide is not a philosophy book. It's a short, practical system you can start using in the next ten minutes. Every chapter ends with something to actually do — not just read.

Here's how it's laid out:

Chapter 1 — why your brain won't drop the thought, in plain language

Chapter 2 — the Name · Ground · Redirect method, your core tool

Chapter 3 — two daily habits that shrink overthinking before it starts

Chapter 4 — your in-the-moment toolkit for when a spiral is already happening

Chapter 5 — a day-by-day 7-day starter plan

Bonuses — printable rescue card, thought log, worry window template, tracker

Read it once, start with Day 1 in Chapter 5, and keep the rescue card (last page) somewhere you'll actually see it — your phone's lock screen, your desk, your mirror.

CHAPTER 1

Why Your Brain Won't Let Go

Overthinking doesn't feel like a malfunction while it's happening. It feels like preparation. Like if you just turn the problem over one more time, you'll find the angle that makes you safe. That's the trap: rumination disguises itself as problem-solving, but it almost never produces an answer. It just produces more thinking.

Two systems, one conflict

Your brain runs a background network (researchers call it the default mode network) that switches on whenever you're not focused on a specific task — showering, driving, lying in bed. That's usually where memory, planning, and reflection happen. It's a useful system.

Layered on top of it is your threat-detection system, which evolved to keep you alive by scanning for danger. It doesn't distinguish well between “a predator is nearby” and “my coworker used a flat tone in that email.” Both get flagged as “potential threat, resolve now.”

When these two systems combine, you get rumination: an idle mind pulled toward a flagged threat, circling it without ever reaching a resolution the threat system will accept as “safe enough.” That's why the loop doesn't stop when you've found a reasonable answer — it stops when your nervous system calms down. Thinking harder rarely calms your nervous system. It usually revs it further.

Why willpower alone doesn't work

“Just stop thinking about it” fails for the same reason “don’t think about a pink elephant” fails: suppressing a thought requires holding the thought in mind in order to check you’re not thinking it. You end up rehearsing it instead. The way out isn’t suppression. It’s interruption — giving your attention somewhere else to go, and giving your body a signal that the threat has passed. That’s exactly what Chapter 2 gives you.

Quick self-check

Circle or note which of these are true for you this week:

- I've replayed the same conversation or decision more than twice in one day
- I've lost real time (30+ minutes) to a spiral I couldn't step out of
- I feel like I need to keep thinking about something or I'm being irresponsible
- I've lost sleep specifically to circling thoughts
- I know logically a worry is unlikely, but that hasn't made it stop

Three or more checked? You're in the right place, and this is common — not a personal failing. The next four chapters give you the actual mechanics to change it.

CHAPTER 2

The Name · Ground · Redirect Method

This is the core tool in this guide. It's three steps, it takes under two minutes, and it works because it targets both halves of the problem at once: it gives your threat system a clear “stand down” signal, and it gives your idle mind somewhere else to go.

STEP 1 — NAME IT

The moment you notice you're circling, say (out loud or in your head): “This is overthinking, not problem-solving.”

Naming it does two things: it pulls you from inside the thought to observing the thought, and it tells your brain the loop has been detected — it doesn't need to keep running to get your attention.

STEP 2 — GROUND IT

Give your body one physical signal that the threat has passed, because your mind won't fully believe you're safe until your body agrees.

Fastest option: the physiological sigh — two short inhales through the nose, one long exhale through the mouth. Repeat three times. This is the quickest known way to lower physiological arousal in real time.

Alternative: press your feet flat into the floor and name 3 things you can see, 2 you can hear, 1 you can feel.

STEP 3 — REDIRECT IT

Your mind will reach for the loop again within seconds unless you hand it something else to do. Pick one pre-decided redirect (choose one below and commit to it before you need it):

- A two-minute task with your hands (dishes, tidying, texting a friend)
- A specific, non-emotional focus task (counting backward from 100 by 7s, naming every item in a category)
- If the worry is legitimate: write it down for your scheduled Worry Window (Chapter 3) instead of solving it now

The method is deliberately small. You are not trying to resolve the underlying worry in these two minutes — you're breaking the loop's momentum. Most spirals lose most of their power the moment they're interrupted once.

Practice it now

Think of a thought you've circled recently. Walk through all three steps right now, even if nothing is actively spiraling. The goal is to make the sequence familiar before you need it under pressure.

The thought I practiced with:

My chosen redirect (pick one to commit to):

CHAPTER 3

Two Daily Habits That Shrink Overthinking

Interrupting a spiral in the moment (Chapter 2) is damage control. These two habits reduce how often spirals start in the first place. Both take under ten minutes and are backed by cognitive behavioral practice: giving worry a scheduled container, rather than letting it run all day, measurably reduces its frequency.

Habit 1: The Worry Window

Pick one 15-minute slot each day (not right before bed). This is the only time you're “allowed” to actively worry. When a worry shows up outside that window, you don't fight it — you write a 3-5 word note and tell yourself, “noted, saved for 5:30.” During the actual window, review your notes and give each one two minutes: is there one small action available? If yes, note the action. If no, let it close and move on.

My daily Worry Window time:

Today's parked worries

Habit 2: The 3-Line Evening Brain Dump

A huge share of nighttime rumination is your brain trying to make sure it doesn't forget something important. Before bed, write three lines, no more:

- One thing that's still unresolved from today
- One thing you're anticipating tomorrow
- One thing that went fine today (your brain needs the evidence, not just the flags)

Keep this near your bed. The rule is three lines only — this isn't journaling time, it's closing the tabs so your mind doesn't have to hold them open overnight.

Unresolved:

Anticipating:

Went fine:

CHAPTER 4

Your In-the-Moment Toolkit

For when you're already mid-spiral and need something faster than a framework. Use these alongside Name · Ground · Redirect, not instead of it.

The one-question filter

Ask: **“Is there an action I can take on this in the next 10 minutes?”** If yes, take the smallest version of it. If no, it's not a problem to solve right now — it's a loop to close (back to Step 1: Name it).

20 reframes for common spiral thoughts

Spiral thought	Reframe
"I need to think about this more."	"I've thought about this enough to know more thinking won't add information."
"What if I said the wrong thing?"	"I said what I could with the information I had in that moment."
"I have to figure this out right now."	"This has a Worry Window. It doesn't have a right-now."
"Everyone probably noticed."	"People are far more focused on themselves than on me — that's just how attention works."

"This means something is wrong with me."	"This means my threat system is overactive right now, not that I'm broken."
"I should have known better."	"I made the best call I could with what I knew then."
"What if it happens again?"	"I can respond to what's happening. I don't need to pre-solve what might."
"I can't stop thinking about it."	"I can interrupt it. I don't have to stop it all at once."

(The full 20-reframe list is in your Bonus Rescue Card at the end of this guide.)

CHAPTER 5

Your 7-Day Starter Plan

Don't try to install all of this at once. Add one piece per day. By Day 7 you'll have the full system running automatically.

- Day 1** Read Chapters 1-2. Practice Name · Ground · Redirect once on purpose, even with a small, non-urgent thought.
- Day 2** Pick and set your Worry Window time. Use it once today, even if you only have one worry to put in it.
- Day 3** Add the Evening Brain Dump before bed. Keep it to exactly three lines.
- Day 4** Use Name · Ground · Redirect the first time you notice a real spiral starting. Note what redirect you used.
- Day 5** Pick 3 reframes from Chapter 4 that hit closest to home. Write them on your rescue card.
- Day 6** Run the full stack: Worry Window + Brain Dump + at least one live interrupt.
- Day 7** Review: which piece is helping most? Keep that one non-negotiable going forward, and treat the rest as backup tools.

After Day 7, this isn't a program you finish — it's a system you keep. Revisit this chapter any week that feels harder than usual.

BONUS TEMPLATE 1

The Thought Log

Use this the first few times you catch a spiral, to build the habit of separating the thought from the reaction. Photocopy this page or recreate it in your notes app.

Entry 1

Trigger (what happened right before?):

The spiral thought:

Is there a 10-minute action available? Y / N

Redirect I used:

How I felt after (1-10):

Entry 2

Trigger (what happened right before?):

The spiral thought:

Is there a 10-minute action available? Y / N

Redirect I used:

How I felt after (1-10):

Entry 3

Trigger (what happened right before?):

The spiral thought:

Is there a 10-minute action available? Y / N

Redirect I used:

How I felt after (1-10):

BONUS TEMPLATE 2

The Overthinking Rescue Card

Screenshot this page, or copy the text into your phone's notes app and pin it. This is your fastest reference when you're mid-spiral and don't have time to reread a chapter.

WHEN A SPIRAL STARTS

1. NAME IT — “This is overthinking, not problem-solving.”
2. GROUND IT — 2 short inhales, 1 long exhale through the mouth. Repeat 3x.
3. REDIRECT IT — hands-on task, focus task, or write it down for the Worry Window.
4. ASK — “Is there a 10-minute action available?” Yes: do it. No: it's closed for now.

GO-TO REFRAMES

- More thinking won't add information I don't already have.
- I did the best I could with what I knew then.
- This has a Worry Window. It doesn't have a right-now.
- I can interrupt this. I don't have to stop it all at once.
- My nervous system is activated — that's not the same as being in danger.

BEFORE YOU GO

One Last Thing

You will not do this perfectly. You'll skip the Worry Window some days, or catch a spiral only after it's already cost you an hour. That's not a sign the system failed — it's a sign you're human. The goal was never a quiet mind that never worries again. It's a mind that knows how to close a loop once it's noticed one. That skill compounds every time you use it.

Keep the Rescue Card close, take the plan one day at a time, and be patient with yourself the way you'd be patient with anyone learning a new skill.

— *Helene Paquet*