

21 ideas from the book - Don't overthink it

- Begin to describe yourself differently:- Beginning now, I don't want you to describe yourself as a chronic overthinker. Instead, begin to describe yourself—if only in your head—as someone who is capable of experiencing less decision angst and more joy and peace, who is learning how to filter out the unimportant, unhealthy, and unhelpful, who doesn't need to habitually second-guess herself. Shifting your mindset is just the first step, but it's an important one.
- Watch what you are doing:- Spot the signs of Analysis Paralysis. Analysis paralysis is one of the most common manifestations of overthinking. Reason can be Intellectual curiosity, information overload, perfectionism. Common signs include, repeatedly putting off decisions until later, postponing a decision in hopes that a better option will present itself, fearing we will make the wrong decision, second-guessing a decision after it is made, seeking more options when we already have enough.
- An antidote to Analysis Paralysis:- a) Do a reality check. Perfect solutions don't exist. There is seldom only one right answer. b) Get moving. Take a small step, set a deadline, or consult a friend. c) Kick perfectionism to the curb. d) Give yourself permission to fail. d) Adopt a 'Try it and See what happens' approach.

- Decide what matters:- Our values can drive our decisions. They can also impact our decision-making and help in clarifying the objective. Your values can be as broad as honesty, truthfulness, loyalty, or anything as small as reaching early to work. Our values can also influence what we choose to keep before our minds—what we think about, which books we choose to read, what kind of news we pay attention to, which issues we commit to caring about.
- Our lives should reflect who we are and what we care about. We may think we know what we value but find that those values don't actually influence our decisions. This inconsistency makes it impossible for our decisions to flow naturally. For example, We may say we value family, but we're never home for dinner. We may say one thing, but if we actually do another, then we don't really value what we say we do.
- When choosing and discovering new values, thinking about who you are as a person and what kind of person you want to be can bring clarity. What big-picture values matter most to you? What causes do you care about? Where do you currently spend your time, money, energy, and attention?
- We tend to think of overthinking as something that happens in our heads, but it's also intimately connected to our physical spaces. Clearing the clutter is a key way to stop overthinking before it starts. Saving mental energy means not repeatedly tackling the same tasks. If you can do the work once and enjoy the benefits repeatedly, do it. Don't duplicate the work! For example, every time I travel, I use the same packing list

- Take care of the body:- When it comes to overthinking, our physical bodies matter. Overthinking is not all in—or about—our headspace. Any plan to prevent excessive overthinking has to consider what's happening in our bodies because when we take care of our bodies, we take care of our brains as well. Lack of exercise is tied directly to overthinking.
- Take breaks:- We can think well for only so long, no matter what we're thinking about. This is why we all take breaks in the course of normal life—for ten minutes or a few hours or occasionally for days on end. So be smart about it, and give yourself regular, restorative breaks. You can do whatever makes you happy during that time.
- Speed up to move on. Waiting time is wasting time. Deciding between two good options sounds like a great position to be in, but it's surprisingly tough because there may be no “right” answer and no clear way to decide. We just need to choose one—because until we do, we keep the decision always in our mind, preventing us from moving on. There are moments we are tempted to beat ourselves up for something unexpected happening. However they are the moments, we know we need to move forward with our actions and our minds.
- You get to choose what you think about:- If we want to spend less time overthinking and more time thinking about the things that matter to us, we must learn to tend our thoughts with care. For this, I've come to embrace a metaphor I first encountered in Gallagher's book *Rapt*. She recommends you treat your mind “as you would a private garden and [be] as careful as possible about what you introduce and allow to grow there.” We must learn to tend our own gardens.

- What to do if the brain gets stuck on the bad stuff:- Getting into repetitive thinking is called rumination. Here are the strategies to deal with it. They are not a quick fix, you need to experiment and find out which one works the best. a) Pay attention to your thoughts. b) Look for the good. You can practice gratitude for this. You can also look for the good to alter your perspective. c) Consider a different point of view. Once your brain lands on a negative interpretation of something like 'why someone is staring at me, do I look okay?', you can consciously prompt yourself to consider a different point of view. The power comes from simply considering another point of view because it forces your thoughts off the negative track they're on.
- How to consider a different point of view:- When I'm struggling to find a positive—or even neutral—interpretation, I turn to two questions that have consistently helped me get my thinking back on track. a) What would I tell my best friend if she were in this situation? When you imagine you're advising someone else, you automatically see the situation more objectively. b) What would I like about this if I liked it? or What would I consider to be good here, if I considered this to be good? For example: "If I felt that meeting was a success, what reasons would I give?" or "If I thought that conversation went well, why would I think so?"
- Brush it aside, for now:- Here is another strategy. When unhelpful thoughts pop up, you don't have to nurture them. When you notice your mind drifting off in a dangerous direction, just tell those thoughts "not now" and brush them aside. My friend suggested I visualize brushing them away as if I were brushing lint off my sweater. You can also schedule a time to overthink.

- When you schedule a time to overthink, you may be able to trade fifteen minutes of concentrated overthinking for twenty-three hours and forty-five minutes of relief. Give yourself permission to indulge these thoughts for a limited time period—and set a timer when you begin so those thoughts don't spill into the rest of your day. Another way to get off the thoughts is to write it down.
- Strategies to streamline decisions:- When you establish to limit your options in daily things you do in the routine, it helps to free mental energy and less decision fatigue. Following are the ways you can do it; a) Eat the same thing. Many high performers in a variety of disciplines regularly eat the same thing every day to free up mental space. b) Adopt a signature dish. c) Wear the same thing. Even former President Obama, spurred by the research on decision fatigue, chose to wear only gray or blue suits while in office. "I'm trying to pare down decisions," he told Michael Lewis in a Vanity Fair interview. d) Adopt a signature look. e) Limit yourself to one source. whenever the countless options feel overwhelming, I look for a way to quickly narrow my options. Not sure what to read next? Try limiting yourself to the books already on your shelf. Need a birthday gift? Try limiting yourself to just one store. f) Limit yourself to one time. i.e If you decide to work out every other morning at 8:00 a.m., you'll no longer worry about when to squeeze in a workout.
- Limit technology creep:- Are you constantly asking yourself if now would be a good time to pull out your device? Consider implementing device-free zones in your life—a physical space and/or a set time when you put your device away. Our digital devices can do us a world of good, but they can also encourage decision fatigue. Be smart about how you engage, lest your device becomes the boss of you instead of the other way around.

- When things go sideways:- Things beyond our control inevitably happen—the sitter cancels, the rain necessitates a change of plans, the power goes out—and we have to pivot in the moment, making the best of the situation. We have to change course, and we have to do it fast. We can't prepare for every situation, but we can plan for things going awry, as they certainly will. a) Just pick something. Make a choice, any choice which is better than staying stuck. b) Lean in, expecting good things. c) Build in margin for the unexpected. One of the ways I do this is by planning to meet my deadlines early, knowing full well that things go wrong and schedules get disrupted. d) Take advantage of these opportunities.
- Rituals to rely on:- Create a ritual. At first blush, rituals and routines have much in common. The difference between the two is not necessarily the action but the attitude behind it. Ritual is something we do with a higher purpose in mind. How we think about things changes the way we experience them.
- Small steps towards simple abundance:- a) Be a little kinder to yourself. When I say abundance, I don't mean splurging on luxury goods or spending extravagantly on a regular basis. I'm talking about the having little things we enjoy but don't necessarily need. Maybe flowers on the vase I love, but I am hesitant to buy. We can appreciate the good things right in front of us without feeling guilty about them. b) Identify your small treats. Savor them. It can be as small as desire of writing with a costly pen. c) Make the good stuff a habit. d) Look for ways to add joy to your days. Simple abundance is a frame of mind, not something you can buy; that feeling of plenty doesn't even have to carry a price tag. It can be a time-out during the day to read a novel, or stop to notice your neighbor's flowers. What a gift it is to give ourselves permission to enjoy these little moments.

- **How to stick with good habits every day:-** One of the ways is to follow the Paper Clip strategy. Another way is to maintain a habit tracker. To quickly recover from a habit breakdown is to make a rule to never miss twice.
- To make your habits even more attractive, you can take this strategy one step further. Join a culture where (1) your desired behavior is the normal behavior and (2) you already have something in common with the group. We can also make it attractive by imitating the powerful i.e people whom we admire. To make the bad habits impossible, try creating a commitment device. A commitment device is a choice you make in the present that controls your actions in the future. Example: You can reduce overeating by purchasing food in individual packages rather than in bulk size. You can voluntarily ask to be added to the banned list at casinos and online poker sites to prevent future gambling sprees. Conversely, If you want to prevent bad habits and eliminate unhealthy behaviors, then adding an instant cost to the action is a great way to reduce their odds. i.e Customers pay their bills on time when they are charged a late fee.
- **The Goldilocks Rule** states that humans experience peak motivation when working on tasks that are right on the edge of their current abilities. Not too hard. Not too easy. Just right. Example: If you want to get fitter, it means finding workouts that challenge but don't exhaust you. The human brain needs some way to visualize our progress if we are to maintain motivation. We need to be able to see our wins.