

DO YOU THINK TOO MUCH?

Does This Sound Like You?

- 1. You anticipate what could go wrong in the future about your health, your job, your environment, or your family.**
- 2. You are preoccupied with a concern or worry past the point where your thinking can realistically provide any gains.**
- 3. You think the worst or “catastrophize” about possible future events in order to make sure you won’t be taken by surprise.**
- 4. You think “What if?” thoughts and have a hard time stopping.**
- 5. You try to come up with answers or solutions to problems that have not happened yet—and get stressed when your answers don’t provide you with relief.**
- 6. If you DO come up with a reasonable solution to some future problem, you follow it with “But what if that doesn’t work? Then what will I do?”**
- 7. People tell you that you think too much.**
- 8. You hesitate to make a final decision and act on it because you want to be absolutely sure it will be the right decision.**
- 9. You have a need to be perfect or to not make mistakes.**
- 10. You over-plan for events and consider all possible options to the point where it is difficult to know exactly which is the better option.**
- 11. You get a bit superstitious: you fear that by NOT overthinking you will regret it later.**
- 12. You approach less-complicated tasks with the same intensity that you approach more-complicated tasks.**
- 13. You are often cranky or irritable.**
- 14. You sometimes are “up all night” worrying.**
- 15. You have an anxiety disorder, depression, a substance problem, or a strained relationship.**



Dr. Paul Coleman Psychologist/Author

Dr. Coleman is the author of 12 books and has appeared on TV shows such as OPRAH and TODAY as well as hundreds of radio programs. He is an expert on PTSD, anxiety, intuition, grief, and relationships. For fun, he is also a playwright and actor and has performed Off-Off Broadway.

“Dr. Paul Coleman’s book contains the wisdom of the ages and sages. So read on and let your heart make up your mind and create your new life.”
—BERNIE SIEGEL, M.D., AUTHOR OF *THE ART OF HEALING AND 365 PRACTICES FOR THE SOUL*

Finding Peace When Your Heart Is in Pieces

A Step-by-Step Guide to
the Other Side of
Grief, Loss, and Pain

PAUL COLEMAN, PSYD

“Dr. Paul Coleman’s book contains the wisdom of the ages and sages.”

Bernie Siegel, M.D.

Author of “Love, Medicine, and Miracles” and “The Art of Healing”

“Touching and insightful...”

Mark Anthony

Author of “Never Letting Go”

The more you answered “YES” to the above statements, the more YOU ARE AN OVERTHINKER and overthinking has taken over your mental and emotional life.

Is OVERTHINKING a Bad Thing?

YES. Overthinking is a problem because it actually *interferes* with reasonable decision making. Do not confuse “reasonable thinking” with overthinking. Computer programmers, for example, must anticipate a user’s needs in as many areas as possible to insure a quality product. That is not overthinking. That is their job. BUT if a programmer constantly reviews what has been developed despite reassurances all is okay, hunts for errors over and over, or stays up late preoccupied—then he or she is overthinking.

Overthinkers waste energy. The emotional cost or time-cost is too high and the benefit is too low.

Overthinkers *hesitate*—they are too cautious—and often miss opportunities or stop short of taking any real action.

Overthinkers don’t consider that most of the time in life we have to react to events as they occur because they are unexpected. No matter how well we plan, there is always something that does not go as planned—there are delays, things break, people interfere, the weather interferes, we become ill---SOMETHING happens that we must contend with. And guess what? WE COPE JUST FINE ALMOST ALL THE TIME. In other words, overthinking cannot prepare us that well for the unexpected and even if the unexpected happens, most people handle it okay most of the time.

Overthinking can cause *analysis paralysis* whereby no action is taken—or it is not taken in a timely manner.

Overthinkers often annoy those around them. In fact, others may compensate for your overthinking by becoming too casual, too impulsive, too “go with the flow”—which can add to your stress.

Overthinkers create *decision fatigue*. That is a process whereby too much obsessing and analysis creates mental fatigue so that decisions made later in the day or week become impulsive or poorly thought out—just the opposite of overthinking. A simple example would be someone who cannot make up their mind what to order at a restaurant—they read and re-read—they try to decide between what is healthy

and what is not, what is too costly, if should they be adventurous and order something new or order something they’ve had before, or should they consider what others might think about their choice. They simply over-analyze and by the time the waiter asks them what they want they say “Oh, heck, I don’t care. I’ll have the special.” In other words, people who overthink things they can’t do much about grow fatigued and don’t always make reasonable choices about things they CAN do something about because they are just too darn tired of thinking!

So-- What’s to Be DONE?????

First, a brief lesson in brain functioning. The LEFT side of your brain is the problem-solving, analyzing part. The RIGHT side is more intuitive and non-verbal. The LEFT side INSISTS on answers and on knowing for sure they are correct. The RIGHT side allows for uncertainty and embraces a “go with the flow and cross bridges when you get there” philosophy.

So, if you looked at a painting and immediately said “Oh, I love that!”—that was your right brain making a broad judgment. **The right-brain looks at the whole; the left-brain looks at the parts.** If I were to ask you “So what exactly do you like about that painting?” you would then go into your left-brain which looks at details and offers a point-by-point analysis.

What do people who cope well in life do that makes them able to cope? *They allow their left brain to problem-solve those concerns they can REALISTICALLY solve, and they allow their right brain to go with the flow until events happen or other facts emerge in which something can be done.*

Overthinkers OVER-DO left-brain problem solving to the point where too many factors and details are involved and no realistic solutions can be discovered because there are too many speculations and future-focused outcomes to manage effectively. **OVERTHINKERS focus on OUTCOME. Non-overthinkers who cope well with life FOCUS ON PROCESS as well as outcome. THEY RECOGNIZE** when they are overthinking and that they are SHOOTING THEMSELVES IN THE FOOT. They are willing to WAIT AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS and do so PEACEFULLY.

Here are FIVE steps that will help you to OVERCOME OVERTHINKING. Let’s face it—all you need to do is to THINK calmly and realistically—NOT OVERTHINK with agitation and confusion! YOUR GOAL IS TO BALANCE LEFT-BRAIN and RIGHT-BRAIN THINKING. NOT OVER-DO ONE SIDE.

1. **RECOGNIZE** that you are an overthinker and that overthinking is something you wish to overcome. It is not something to take pride in. If you are an organized person—great. If you like to perform a job well done—fine. But if you obsess about being organized or are obsessed with a need to be perfect and not make mistakes, you will have **STRESS**. And stress causes you in particular to do what? You guessed it—**OVERTHINK!** Do you see?

It is a never-ending feedback loop. You anticipate some worrisome future outcome—you then try to come up with action plans—you then think of all the ways your action plans may not work—you get **MORE STRESSED**—which causes you think even more about what to do. Eventually you discover that you cannot plan for all outcomes and you feel threatened by your future. This “threat” then results in you having a “fight-flight response” and your coping skills get revved up even more—except that **YOUR COPING SKILLS ALWAYS INVOLVE MORE AND MORE AND MORE THINKING!**

2. Practice “emotional acceptance.” I devote an entire chapter to this concept in my book “Finding Peace When Your Heart Is in Pieces.” But for now, keep in mind that when you concentrate on high-powered, high-ideal words such as Acceptance, Peace, Gratitude, Love, Forgiveness, Trust, Faith, Gentleness, Kindness and so forth---*those concepts resonate with the right hemisphere of your brain which is the hemisphere that helps you “go with the flow” and experience PEACE OF MIND.* It is the left hemisphere that insists you anticipate, analyze, overanalyze, and solve problems that are not even problems yet.

Your GOAL is to balance left-brain analysis with right-brain acceptance.

Begin by repeating—over and over—“I accept uncertainty. I accept not knowing for sure what will happen.” Also repeat “I may not like this situation (or future situation) but I accept it.”

You don’t even have to believe wholeheartedly what you are saying. Just repeat the phrases.

3. Add “faith and trust” to your acceptance. Faith and trust does **not** mean that you have faith and trust that all will work out exactly as you want it to. That is not faith—that is a desire to control the future. **CONTROL IS A LEFT-BRAIN function.** You don’t want that—even if you think you do.

The best trust and faith to possess is:

“I have trust and faith that however things work out I will handle it. And I have trust and faith it can even be for my benefit in some way—even if I cannot be sure what that benefit is at the time.”

There are research studies that examined the power of prayer to bring about a certain outcome. In one group of studies by the Spindrift organization, grass seeds were planted in a small area of dirt and the section was divided into two. People actually “prayed” for one side to grow better than the other side—and it worked! But the best prayer of all? They called it the “Thy will be done prayer.”

And when you think of it, people who pray to God for an outcome but say “Your will be done” do indeed cope better.

4. **Take action.** If there is indeed some action you can realistically take **RIGHT NOW** that will help alleviate your concerns, then do so. If not, do some physical exercise for at least five minutes. Do push-ups, wash the floor, do jumping jacks—anything that will disrupt your mind chatter and get rid of excess energy you have built up by your overthinking.
5. **Schedule obsessive thinking.** Seriously. People who cope well sometimes worry. But they are not controlled by worry. Research shows that if you schedule some time to purposely overthink—say 30 minutes—and then when the time is up remind yourself that you will overthink again at the next scheduled time, you begin to control your thinking process instead of it controlling you. Think of your mind-chatter as an impatient child that wants your attention. It’s ok to say “Not now—but I will pay attention later.”

Keep this important tip in mind: YOUR LEFT-BRAIN does NOT want to lose control. It wants to be your default-drive when you have a problem to solve. WHY? Because you have trained your brain to go to the left-hemisphere primarily when there are potential “threats.”

But the left-brain works best when 1. There IS a realistic solution to your problem and 2. You have control over all of the variables.

But guess what? When you worry about a future problem that may not even happen, and if you “catastrophize” and imagine all the bad things that could go wrong, then:

- 1. There IS NO REALISTIC SOLUTION TO ALL THOSE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS and**
- 2. YOU PROBABLY DON'T HAVE CONTROL OVER ALL OF THE VARIABLES.**

SO how do you reasonably expect to calm yourself down? You can't. It's impossible. Or rather, it's impossible IF you convince yourself that the ONLY way to calm down is to predict a likely outcome that fixes your worries.

But that is not the only way to calm down. In fact, it is the WORST WAY TO TRY TO CALM DOWN BECAUSE IT RARELY IF EVER SUCCEEDS.

The real problem is not WHAT you are worried about. It is THE WAY YOU PROCESS INFORMATION.

Think about that. Overthinkers get caught up in the CONTENT of their thoughts. They fail to realize that the PROCESS—the manner in which they deal with their thoughts—is the real culprit.

Take two people. Each has to wait for a medical test result that will tell them if they have a severe illness or not. One person is worried sick and cannot stop thinking about all of the “what if's?” The other is able to say “I'll see what happens. No sense worrying about it now if it may not even become a problem.”

The CONTENT is the same—each is awaiting a test result. But the way they each PROCESS that situation is different.

The KEY to halt overthinking—once again—is to learn to ACCEPT UNCERTAINTY—to learn to BE AT PEACE with not-knowing-for-sure.

The more you practice saying “I accept uncertainty...I accept not knowing for sure” you actually build neuropathways—little highways—into the RIGHT-SIDE of your brain.

THANK YOU FOR LEARNING ABOUT OVERTHINKING!

I very much appreciate your faith in me and respect your desire to improve your mental health and your life.

Please feel free to "LIKE" my Dr. Paul Coleman page on FACEBOOK.

And go to my website www.peacefulbook.com and sign up for my free newsletter.

I've also recently recorded over 20 short videos (2-4 minutes) that will soon be uploaded to my youtube channel.

Subscribe to DrPaulWColeman on youtube.

Warmly,

Dr. Paul

Over 65 million Americans have a diagnosis of Anxiety Disorder or Depression. Overthinking is a major factor.

- **Overthinking CREATES stress. Stress leads to a host of other problems including illness, alcohol abuse, and conflicts with others.**
- **Inner peace and overthinking do not mix.**
- **About 70% of people ages 25-35 are chronic overthinkers.**
- **About 52% of people 45-55 overthink.**
- **About 20% over 65 overthink.**
- **9/11 and the economic collapse in 2008 added to overthinking.**
- **Overthinking impairs rational thought. Overthinkers wrongly believe they are being MORE logical.**

“Finding Peace When Your Heart Is in Pieces”

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- **Overthinking stems from a desire to have greater control .**
- **Overthinkers approach less-complicated tasks with an intensity similar to how they approach highly-complicated tasks.**
- **After a loss or trauma, overthinkers have greater stress than non-overthinkers.**
- **Overthinkers have less confidence in reasonable solutions to their worrries. They believe if they are not overthinking then they are UNDERthinking.**

QUESTIONS

1. How do you define “overthinking”?
2. What are the four types of overthinking?
3. Is overthinking ever a good thing?
4. If overthinkers still “get the job done” what is wrong with that?
5. You say that “thinking positive” doesn’t help an overthinker. Why?
6. What are some ways to stop overthinking?

CONTACT

E-mail: Paul @Paul-coleman.com

www.peacefulbook.com

845-546-1206 cell

845-297-6198 office

THE BOOK

“FINDING PEACE WHEN YOUR HEART IS IN PIECES” available on AMAZON and BARNES & NOBLE.com and in bookstores.

Dr. Coleman has been featured on these and many other media outlets:

