

Emotion recognition and overthinking



What is Overthinking?

Worry



- Usually focused on the future
- May involve thinking that something bad will happen
- Normal emotion that everyone experiences
- Can interfere with everyday life

Rumination



- Usually focused on the past or self
- May involve going over and over situations or feelings as well as self-critical thoughts
- Can interfere with everyday life

Overthinking Triggers

Social media

Peer Pressure

Self- image
issues

Social
Situations

Family
conflicts

Friendship
problems

Upcoming
events

Change/
Transitions

The Future

Academic
Expectations

Fear of failure

What overthinking might look like overall

**Difficulties sleeping
and coming to
school tired**

Low self-esteem

**Verbalising self-
critical thoughts**

**Questioning
yourself**

**Seeking
reassurance**

**Worrying about bad
things happening to
yourself/your family**

**Withdrawing from
or avoiding social
situations**

**Emotional signs e.g.
fear, anger, crying**

**Low Mood or
changes in mood**

**Difficulties
concentrating in school
impacting academic
progress**

**Physical feelings
e.g. headache, sickness,
fast heart rate**

Perfectionism

**Not trying new
things**

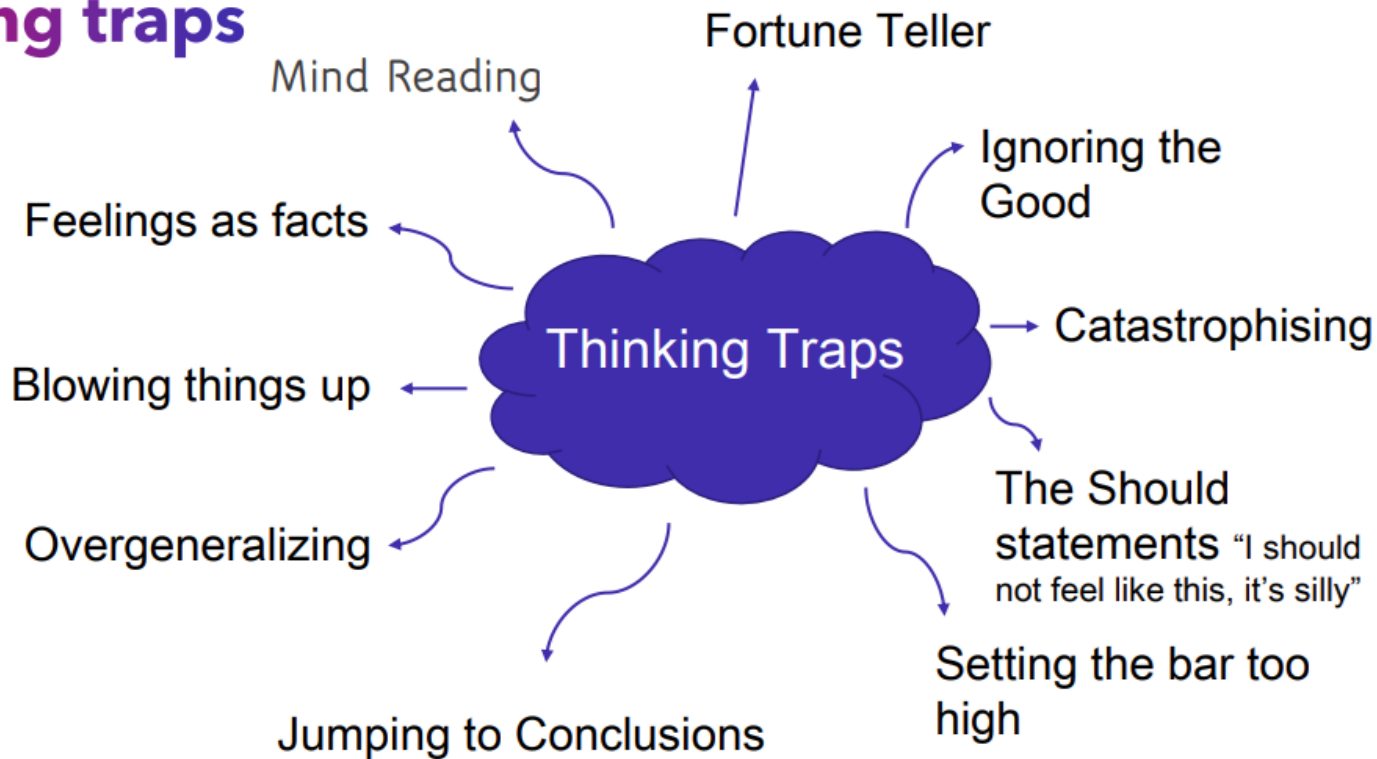
**Difficulties
separating from
parents**

**These can all be
more intense for
people with ADHD
or Autism**

A hand is shown balancing a stack of five smooth, rounded stones on a beach. The background is a soft-focus view of the ocean and sky. The entire image has a semi-transparent purple and blue gradient overlay.

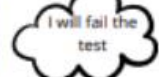
What happens when overthinking gets in the way?

Thinking traps





predictions



I make negative predictions about what might happen in the future even though I have no way of knowing this.



judgements



I make judgements about things even though there is no evidence or facts to back this up.



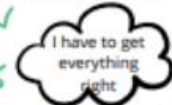
catastrophising



I always think that the worst thing or that something really bad is going to happen.



perfectionist



I put a lot of pressure on myself to do well and set unrealistically high expectations for myself.



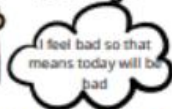
negative glasses



When I have my negative glasses on, I only see the bad things and don't notice any of the good things.



feelings



If I notice negative feelings in myself or by body, I automatically think that it means something bad is happening.



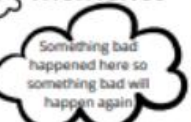
mountains & molehills



I tend to take more notice of the negative things in a situation and down play the positive things.



memories



Some things trigger my negative memories which makes me think something bad will happen again now.



black & white thoughts



I usually think things are either really good or really bad with nothing in between.



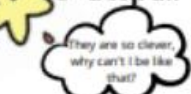
mind reading



I assume I know what other people are thinking and this is usually negative things about me.



compare & despair



I notice positive things about other people but then compare myself negatively to them.



self-critical



I am very critical of my own abilities and about myself.

Overthinking can lead to anxiety and/or low mood

Anxiety



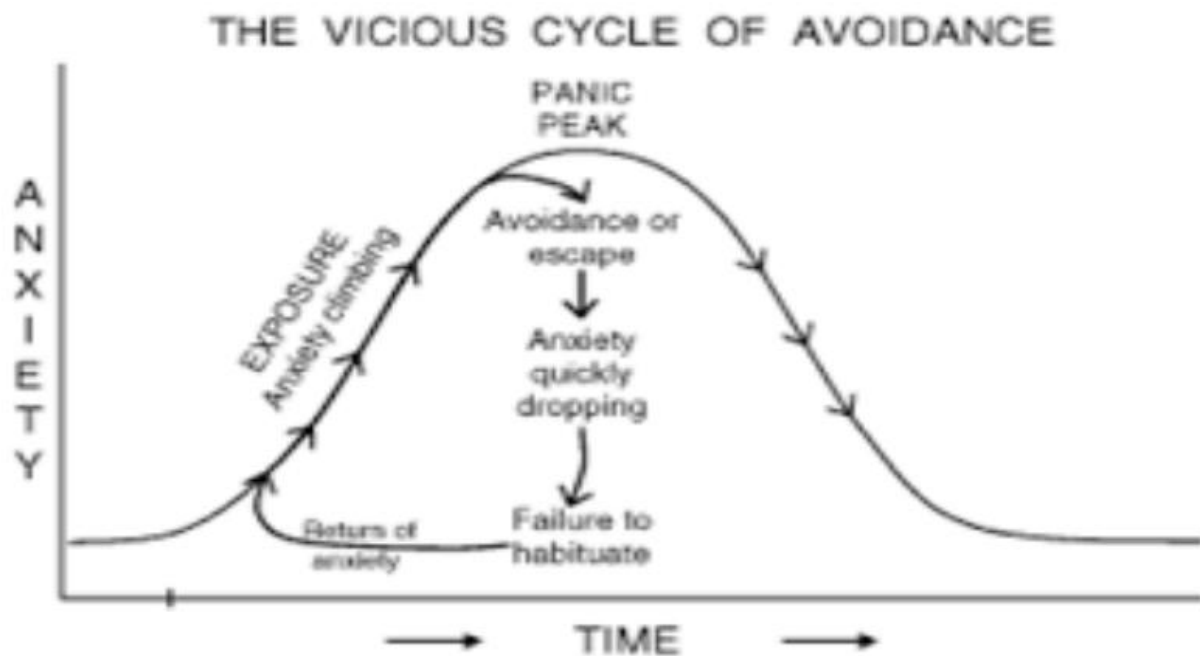
- Feeling worried or scared by things
- Can lead to avoiding things
- Feeling physical symptoms such as fast heart/breathing, feeling sick, sweaty etc...
- Linked with worries and thinking traps

Low Mood



- Feeling little or no energy or motivation
- Can lead to withdrawing from activities you used to enjoy
- Feeling sad, low or empty
- Linked with rumination and thinking traps

The cycle of avoidance





Helpful strategies

Worry Time

- Worry Time is a strategy where you have a set time (up to 20 min) at the same time every day to do your worrying
- This sounds silly but it can be very helpful
- Having lots of worries during the day can become exhausting and take up lots of your time - doing Worry Time means you know you will be able to do your worrying but also frees up more time in the day where you can get on with what you want to do



Worry Time

hypothetical worries

Hypothetical worries are worries that we don't currently have control over and can't do anything about. These can be overwhelming and tiring.

What if I get lost?

What if it rains?

What if the bus is late?

What if I feel tired in the morning?

What if I get worried?

What if the teacher asks me a question?

practical worries

Practical worries are usually worries about a current situation that we can do something about. It can be easy to put these worries off or try to ignore them all together. However, if we don't do something about practical worries, they can pile up and make us feel overwhelmed.

I don't have enough time to do my homework

I have lots of exams coming up

I have to do a presentation

I haven't seen my friends in ages

I've been eating lots of unhealthy food



Worry Time

Worry time gives you time each day to address all of your worries. The more you use worry time, the less your worries will impact you throughout the day.

1 Plan your worry time

It's important to plan in your worry time for the same time each day. This should be a time where you can focus on the worries and not be distracted. Start with a maximum of half an hour each day. As you use worry time more and more, you may notice that you eventually need less than half an hour each day because you get better at dealing with your worries.



2 Catch the worries

As you notice worries during the day, catch them so that you can come back to them later at worry time. You can do this by writing them down, drawing a picture or making a sound recording. You could use a diary, sticky notes, your phone or any other way you can think of to catch the worries as they happen.



3 Refocus your attention

Once you have caught the worry, it's important to focus on something different. Pay attention to whatever it is you're doing at that moment OR do something totally different. You can also refocus by using 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 (see below for more info on this).



4 Worry time

Use worry time to go back and address all of the worries you have caught that day. For each worry decide whether it is a practical worry or hypothetical worry.

- For **practical worries**, use **problem solving**.
- For **hypothetical worries**, let the worries go. You can do this by ripping up, scribbling out, deleting or scrumpling up and throwing away the worry.

Some worries might not even be worries anymore! For these, you will learn that a lot of worries may seem big at the time but later they will seem much smaller and manageable.



Let's Do It

My worry time will be at (time):

It will last for (number of minutes):

I will do it with (will anyone help?):

I will catch my worries by (what will you use?):

Worry Time & Problem Solving

1. Identify the problem
2. Write down ALL the solutions you can think of (no matter how unrealistic they seem)
3. Write down the pros and cons for each solution
4. Give each solution a rating /10
5. Choose your highest rated solution and plan out how you can do it



Problem Solving

Problem =

Possible Solutions

Pros

Cons

Rating /10

Thought Challenging

- When Overthinking causes unhelpful thoughts or worries, we can use thought challenging to manage those thoughts
- When we challenge worrying thoughts, we focus on facts and the evidence for and against the thought
- This can help us to create a more balanced thought as often there is not as much evidence to support the worry

Thoughts
Stand up to and challenge the Brain Bully and think more positive thoughts



How to Challenge Thoughts



CATCH IT - notice – It's one of those pesky unhelpful worry thoughts again



CHECK IT -Take a step back – Am I sure things are actually as bad as I feel they are? Are my worries realistic?



CHALLENGE IT –Is there any evidence this thought might not be 100% true?
Might there be another way of looking at this?



CHANGE IT- what is a more helpful way of thinking about this?

Thought Challenging

Stand up to your Brain Bully

The things Brain Bullies say to us are usually negative **OPINIONS** and are not based on facts or evidence. We can therefore stand up to our Brain Bully by thinking about the **FACTS**.



Opinions

You will fail

Others are better than you

They looked at you funny

Facts

I have revised and will do my best


Everyone is good at different things

They were just looking in my direction and if they did look at me, why does it matter?

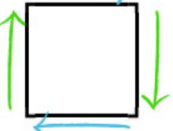


Breathing techniques


FINGER BREATHING
trace hand with a finger whilst breathing deeply



BOX BREATHING
imagine a box
breathe in up one
breathe out on the next



BALLOON BREATHING



imagine blowing up a balloon in your belly by breathing in
hold for 4 and then let it deflate by breathing out

breathe in counting to 4
breathe out counting to 4

Grounding / Calming techniques

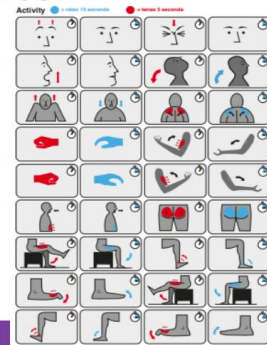
Try visualisation

1. Close your eyes
2. Take slow deep breaths in and out
3. Think of your favourite place
4. Focus on the place and picture yourself there
5. What can you see/smell/hear/feel?

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercises encourage the child to tense up each of their muscles and then relax them. A useful script that could be used can be found here:

<https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheet/progressive-muscle-relaxation-script.pdf>



Safe Place

Grounding / Calming techniques


5-4-3-2-1



5 things you can SEE



4 things you can FEEL



3 things you can HEAR



2 things you can SMELL



1 thing you can TASTE

CATEGORIES GAME

pick a random letter of the ABC
now ask for 3 things that start with that letter



ROOM SEARCH



think of a category and then look around the room for everything that fits