

M I C H A E L N E A V E



OVERTHINKING:
A Fight for Control

A BOOK FOR
THE STRATEGIST

OVERTHINKING:
A Fight for Control

By Michael Neave

For Saku

You presented the hardest decisions, but gave the most love.
It was a good deal.

DISCLAIMER

Thank you for taking the time to read this book. Here, you will read about all that I have done to solve my own overthinking problem. Everything that you read here has come from my own mind and is expressed through my own words unless stated otherwise. I have only studied psychology as a hobby; I am not a mental health professional, psychologist, or therapist. I share my findings simply as another perspective and solution towards overthinking.

Overthinking is a serious issue and can cause real harm to an individual. Anxiety, depression, OCD, ADHD, PTSD, and other disorders can cause overthinking to the point of serious debilitation, where the mind neglects any form of logical reassurance. If you believe your overthinking is severe and causing an unprecedented amount of pain or stress, please speak with a professional. This book is not meant to treat mental disorders and should, instead, be viewed as a tool to deal with an “average” level of overthinking. If you find this book unhelpful, I strongly recommend exploring other resources, as there are many ways to address the same problem.

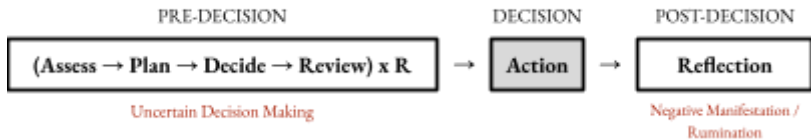
Thank you.

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THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS



R = The number of times the process has been repeated

O-ver-think

Verb

- Think about (something) for too much or for too long.

From the Oxford Dictionary

- To think too much about (something) : to put too much time into thinking about or analyzing (something) in a way that is more harmful than helpful.

From the Merriam-Webster Dictionary

- The action of thinking about something too much, in a way that is not useful.

From the Cambridge Dictionary

A FIGHT FOR CONTROL

Ever since I was 9, I wanted to be a professional soccer player. I trained hard, I worked out, and I got pretty good. At sixteen, I was told that I had grown too old, and by eighteen, my childhood team had disbanded as everyone headed off to college. During my run, I came close and had many people who believed it would happen, but it never materialized. My father had always told me to have a Plan B in case it didn't work, but the elite athlete mentality always suggested that planning to fail was the number one reason you did.

After finishing high school, I had to make a decision: go to school or go to work. I had many interests, but every time I entertained the idea of seeking an education in that field, I doubted it. This developed my reputation as an indecisive quitter. I would create plans, attempt those plans, fail, and then make more plans. I struggled with this for the next four years. By that time, I had tried to go to school three times, started a few businesses that all failed, switched career ideas over a dozen times, while many of my high school classmates were graduating. The funny thing was, two of those schools had already accepted me with one offering a 50% scholarship for soccer, and two of those businesses (that took over a year to build) generated more than six hundred dollars in the first three months (an art business and a coaching business). I overthought it.

I kept thinking about soccer; was I giving up, or was I holding on to nothing? I kept thinking about school; should I invest the money or should I invest in a business? I kept thinking about my future; should I settle for something, or should I keep trying to find another passion as strong as soccer? I had too many variables, too many options. How could I be sure I wouldn't waste another nine years as I did with soccer and come out happy and content? How could I take back control of my life from my own mind?

The Solution

Thanks to the recommendation of a friend, I started journaling in monthly spurts about a year ago. He knew how wild my childhood was and suggested that I get my thoughts down on paper before they changed with age. Soon the book started to fill, and I decided that I wanted to publish it when it was done. The issue I faced now came from a question I posed to myself: Will you work hard for another year to quit at the finish line? This was the first time I ever caught myself in the act.

Through research and self-analysis, I concluded that I falsely believed commitment meant being the prisoner of a decision, so I would escape before it got too big and more time was wasted. I then acknowledged that writing a book had no real commitment afterwards and that committing meant I could finally have some of my favourite hobbies (psychology and philosophy)

documented. To ensure success, I decided to write a shorter book that I wouldn't publish unless I choose to do so upon completion. Now I just needed a topic to write about. That is when I realised something, I didn't just solve my book commitment issue, I solved all of my commitment issues. I solved my overthinking.

Before I could write about it, I needed to go back through the process to unravel how I actually did it. I, of course, then had to generalise it all so it actually worked against a multitude of commonly overthought situations. Once I discovered this, I applied it to other aspects of my life. After the near elimination of overthinking, I felt as if a fog had been lifted from every bit of my mind. I hope to share this with you now, so let us start from the beginning.

WHAT IS OVERTHINKING?

Overthinking has always been a strange concept to me. Overthinking villainized the Strategist. It felt like a term created by a group of dull-minded, jealous individuals. A term meant to shame those who thought things through. Despite this, if you asked a random person, of any age, if they'd consider themselves an overthinker, chances are they do. Really, we feel no shame in admitting it because instinctively we know that it is actually a trait of the wise to think before taking action. I bring you bad news: that isn't what overthinking is. The concept was only strange because I misunderstood it, like many of us. Overthinking is actually the opposite of how the wise operate.

The definition was easy to find. Overthinking happens when your thoughts become harmful, unhelpful, inefficient, useless, and/or needlessly time-consuming. Now this made more sense. However, to continue forward, I wanted to connect action to outcome. What are some examples of negative or useless thoughts? With these characteristics and my observations/readings on commonly overthought situations, I have come up with a list of identifiers to answer this question:

- ❖ Constant changing of the mind when making a decision.
- ❖ Regularly insulting oneself.

- ❖ Becoming frustrated easily while making decisions or thinking about past situations.
- ❖ Thinking in circles with no direction.
- ❖ Unable to identify the goal of a thought.
- ❖ Dwelling on arguments or negative situations for days, months, or years.
- ❖ Struggle to commit to anything.
- ❖ Continuously making the same mistakes over and over again.
- ❖ Hyperfocused on the negative aspects of something without consideration for the positives.

It is easy to identify how these traits can be wasteful and harmful. Even still, we attempt to justify these thoughts to ourselves by suggesting we are simply strategists, perfectionists, or high performers with high standards. It is important to note that not everyone will attempt to defend themselves, though some are just self-destructive or even mentally/emotionally lost. Taking a look back at the list, can you identify any connections or major elements that you noticed?

I noticed three things, each leading to the next.

Under The Microscope

First: Overthinking is Inevitable and Impossible to Erase

Everything that was on that list is, unfortunately, quite normal. All of those situations happen regularly to nearly everyone and seem to be a guaranteed element of the human experience. In this case, overthinking doesn't seem to be completely preventable. Similar to emotions, the act of overthinking can be limited but never fully erased. It isn't possible to never again have a harmful, useless, time-wasting thought.

Second: The Two Types of Overthinking

I must come clean here. Until now, I was viewing overthinking only as an obstacle to making a decision. It wasn't until this that I was reminded of the other. To many, the first thing thought of when talking about overthinking is rumination. Rumination is the act of deeply thinking about the past or present in a negative way. I saw overthinking in the way someone overthinks a decision or action. So, how were these two connected?

Why do we overthink a decision? → To ensure we make a good one.

Why do we overthink moments? → To understand what happened.

Why do we want to understand? To make better decisions.

So, why do we overthink in general? → We want to make all the right decisions.

Third: Overthinking is about Control

We overthink to be certain that everything we do is the correct option. It made complete sense. All of our psychological phenomena stem from primitive desires; in this case, we want control. We want total control in our lives. We want every decision to be a good one, we want to be smart, and we never want to fail. So why do we? Well, like a parent who believes screaming will gain them respect and authority, we sabotage ourselves by seeking control.

Identifiers	Relating to Control
Constant changing of the mind when making a decision.	Wanting control of an outcome.
Regularly insulting oneself.	Wanting control of the self.
Becoming frustrated easily while making decisions or thinking about past situations.	Frustration that you are not or were not fully in control.
Thinking in circles with no direction.	Accepting then denying your lack of control.
Unable to identify the goal of a thought.	Blinding rage or annoyance due to your lack of control.

Dwelling on arguments or negative situations for days, months, or years.	A combination of insulting yourself for failing and searching for some element you can accept.
Struggle to commit to anything.	Not in full control over success. It isn't guaranteed.
Continuously making the same mistakes over again.	Not accepting that you lack control so you fall back into the same patterns.
Hyperfocused on the negative aspects of something without consideration for the positives.	A form of acceptance to a lack of control but through a negative lens.

Conclusion

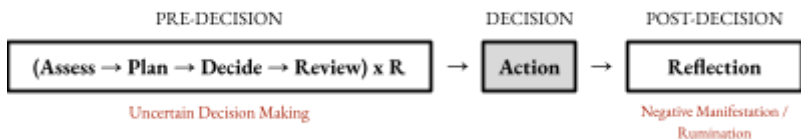
Overthinking is an internal struggle for control, using negatively aimless thoughts. We want the very best for ourselves and will self-harm to get it. Those who lack control will demand it, but using insults and rage doesn't work as well on ourselves as it sometimes does with others. We also know that overthinking can be divided into two: overthinking current decisions and past experiences. Lastly, we know that it won't ever really go away. Negative thoughts are a part of life, but that doesn't mean there is nothing to be done.

You now understand what overthinking is; that is half the battle, as one must know their opponent. Next, we learn about the method I developed and

refined to nearly eliminate my daily overthinking, which I call the *Decision-Making Process*.

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

With everything we have learned so far, I connected the two types of overthinking to create a simple, and frankly, unoriginal process for efficient, solution-focused thinking. My philosophy is that overthinking stems from a desire for control; therefore, we must identify what we can and can't control while focusing on the former. In other words, a lack of knowledge and understanding would result in overthinking a decision, while a lack of progressive analysis ability would result in overthinking memories and moments. Logically, what better focus can there be than improving our decision-making abilities?



R = The number of times the process has been repeated

The decision-making process is divided into three stages, with “taking action” in the middle. On the left, we find the *Pre-Decision*, which is where we think before we do. After making the decision and taking action, we move to the

right side called the *Post-Decision*, where we reflect on our choices. This formula puts us in control of both situations that could lead to overthinking in a way we can understand and accept.

Each part is essential, and if done incorrectly, it can lead to overthinking, which I have now labeled *Uncertain Decision-Making* and *Negative Manifestation / Ruminaton*.

Pre-Decision

The process of taking everything we know and don't know to make a decision.

In this stage, we have five steps: assess, plan, decide, review, and repeat.

Correct Execution:

When this is done well, you'll have utilized all of your knowledge and assets to their fullest, resulting in the best possible plan you could make. The best plan we can make may not necessarily come with the best result, but in this case we'll find comfort in knowing the *Decision-Making Process* was performed perfectly. This is your highest chance of success.

Incorrect Execution:

When this isn't done well, we increase the odds of making the wrong decision. Alternatively, you may have made the right decision, but it feels like the wrong one because you didn't make it with full confidence. In other words, you feel like you aren't doing your best, which can lead to stress, negative self-perception, and doubt. I call this *Uncertain Decision-Making*.

Decision

Straightforward, it is where we take action and commit.

Post-Decision

Where we reflect on a decision, and can be immediately after or 10 years later.

Correct Execution:

When this is done well, you can identify what you did wrong and what you did right, to either avoid or redo it in future *Pre-Decisions* (this is called learning through experience). Doing this right means growth but requires high levels of consciousness.

Incorrect Execution:

There are two ways you could mess up the *Post-Decision* in a way that relates to overthinking, but both follow the same principle: you are disconnected from the objective world.

1. You fail thanks to your poor planning and blame the world, so you don't have to take any accountability. Think of someone blaming their pre-diabetic diagnosis on poor genetics instead of acknowledging their bad diet. This type of person believes they have no control and will spend their time feeling like a prisoner in a cruel world.
2. Whether you fail or succeed, you feel like you didn't make a good enough decision and judge yourself too harshly. Think of someone who was taught how to do math by a bad teacher and got 82% on their quiz. Despite a bad teacher, they performed well, but may have done better with a better one. In the end, they feel like it was entirely their fault and that they are a failure. These people can be perfectionists who believe they will never achieve total success.

Both involve misunderstanding the situation and its outcomes, I call this *Negative Manifestation/Rumination*.*

*Manifestation is the process of turning your desires, ideas, goals, into reality by constantly believing, thinking, and working on them. Negative manifestation is the focus on negative consequences and outcomes, leading to the perception or even the reality of those thoughts. Rumination is deeply thinking about the past or present in a negative way. In other words, you'll find what you are looking for — make sure you are looking for the right thing.

PRE-DECISION

The *Pre-Decision* is the first stage in the *Decision-Making Process* and is a necessary step in determining what your decision will be, using information, experience, and guidance. When someone over-thinks at this stage, it is called *Uncertain Decision-Making*. Essentially, the individual cannot confidently make a decision that they can accept as their best, leading to overthinking. Confidence in a decision results in peace of mind. For the confident, there is nothing to think about; they already know the answer. If you take a look at a cup of water, taste it, and smell it, you could pretty easily establish that it is water.*

*If you have reason to anticipate deception, then overthinking may occur.

Have you ever started a new job with little to no prior knowledge of the tasks involved? How did it feel at first? Tricky? Nerve-wracking? Mentally draining? When you are doing something new, you cannot have the luxury of “effortlessness”, not yet. Fortunately, and as you know, practicing and learning will eventually lead to ‘effortlessness’. With that being said, the *Pre-Decision* is designed to help you expedite the process. There are four stages with an optional fifth. *Assess, Plan, Decide, Review, and Repeat*. Using this method, we

can efficiently organize our thoughts, determine what we have and what is needed, and make a choice.

Assess: Gather all that you know and what you need to know — Sort the puzzle pieces.

Plan: Using the elements gathered in the assessment, create a plan — Piece the puzzle together.

Decide: Choose what you believe to be the best decision — Choose your final answer to submit.

Review: Before committing, return to the beginning and check your answer — Check your work.

Repeat: Restart the cycle if required — Take the puzzle apart and start over.

Side Note: You may have noticed that the *Pre-Decision* Process is a replica of the entire *Decision-Making Process*, with the only difference being the lack of commitment. This allows for the perception of freedom and less stress when devising a plan. A calm mind is an efficient one.

Uncertain Decision-Making results from the inability to make good plans and take all elements into account. When we overthink the *Pre-Decision*, we feel a lack of confidence in our choices, thought patterns, or understanding of the situation. Therefore, to avoid this form of overthinking, we will explore all of the ways we can improve our decision-making abilities.

The Breakdown

As we explore each stage, I will provide an example using my thought process to decide whether I should continue writing the book I have worked on for a year or start a new one with the hope that my self-esteem would increase. I, of course, chose the ladder.

Assess

The “step one” in any process is often considered to be the most important; there is no difference here. The acquisition of information is required to make reasonable decisions. Think of a detective in a mystery novel; during the examination of the crime scene, suspects, or plausible causes, the detective will almost always gather more information than we do. Why? Because they are professional observationalists. The groundskeeper's favourite drink, being hot chocolate, seems normal and irrelevant to us, but to the detective, it was an important clue to solving the murder mystery.

My point is, the more elements, factors, clues, liabilities, and assets we can identify, the more puzzle pieces we will have to use. Factors in a decision can be literally anything. To help, I have listed some common places to start looking.

What Do You Have and What Don't You Have?

- ❖ Money
- ❖ Desires
- ❖ Favors from Others
- ❖ Deadlines
- ❖ Skills or Abilities
- ❖ Support (someone to help accomplish the task)
- ❖ Access to Advice (experience or knowledge)
- ❖ Behaviours
- ❖ Obstacles (people, places, things)
- ❖ Laws or limitations that you must follow
- ❖ Previous Experiences

To be good at planning and thinking in general is to be good at asking questions. The question you have just seen and its variations serve as a starting point. To improve your assessment, I'd recommend writing down every point you can think of (in no particular order). Writing it down will avoid it getting lost in your mind. Once you have that written down, divide them into

organized groups; it could be positives & negatives, assets & liabilities, or anything that makes sense to you. Another helpful tip to easily identify important elements is to recall previous decisions or situations. For example, if the detective made note of the groundskeeper's love for hot chocolate in the last novel, maybe next time you'll look twice at the preferences of others and how they could connect with the mystery. This is how one learns from their previous mistakes and successes, which we will discuss further in the *Decision Reflection* section.

ASSESS EXAMPLE

On a sheet of paper I wrote out the positives and negatives of each option as well as the possible obstacles and overall goal. Being honest with myself and identifying these points took some time and deep reflection.

As someone looking in you may see these points and figure the answer is obvious, remember, there are emotions involved when making a decision. In my case, I struggled to determine whether or not I was really looking for a positive change or just creating an excuse to give up.

① CONTINUE THE BIG BOOK OR

② START A SMALLER ONE?

① POSITIVES

- PUBLISHED BOOK
- OVER A YEAR OF WORK SO FAR
- ON A TOPIC THAT IS NEAR + DEAR TO ME.

NEGATIVES

- LOST
- WILL STILL TAKE A WHILE TO COMPLETE
- NERVOUS THAT IT WON'T BE AS GOOD AS I WOULD LIKE.

② POSITIVES

- COULD GET IT DONE QUICKLY
- GOOD PRACTICE FOR THE BIG BOOK
- COULD WRITE ABOUT SOMETHING THAT DIDN'T FIT INTO THE BIG ONE.
- I CAN WRITE WITHOUT LIMITATIONS UNLIKE A PUBLISHED BOOK.

NEGATIVES

- STARTING FROM SCRATCH (AGAIN)
- ABANDONING A CURRENT PROJECT (AGAIN)
- WOULDN'T BE PUBLISHED.

CONTINUE THE BIG BOOK OR
START A SMALLER ONE?

POSSIBLE OBSTACLES

- GETTING BORED
- FEELING DISCOURAGED
- WORRY THAT IT WON'T BE GOOD ENOUGH
- CONSTANTLY COMMITTING TO THINGS JUST TO GIVE UP AT THE FINISH LINE.

OVERALL GOAL

- WRITE A BOOK
- PUBLISH THAT BOOK.

Plan

Once we have our pieces, we begin putting them together to create a plan. To arrive at a reasonable decision naturally requires an understanding of what is possible and impossible. We cannot make a good decision without knowing how it will be executed; knowing how it will be executed means building a plan. To identify if that particular decision is the best, we create a game plan for the other possible choices. We will review each decision and its game plan, compare them, and then settle on one in the deciding stage.

Recap: Take all possible choices, create a plan for each, compare, decide.

Create this using the points from your Assess step.

IDEA A	IDEA B	IDEA C
Plan: Pros: Cons: Notes:	Plan: Pros: Cons: Notes:	Plan: Pros: Cons: Notes:

Compare then Decide

Most of the work is in this process. Unsurprisingly, this is also where people make the most mistakes. Using all the factors from the assessment, we begin to create several possible decisions that we would be happy with. To be a good strategist, I was required to develop three skills. Planning involves using *logic* to determine obvious right or wrong moves, *emotional intelligence* to understand how it will affect or be affected by yourself or others, as well as how it may affect or be affected by others, and *creativity* to think outside of the box without limitations.

Logic:

Logic and evidence are the basis of objective thinking. Logic involves using what we know to fill in the blanks of what we don't know. As you plan, you'll see obvious decisions and choices; those obvious choices can help you with the less obvious ones. There are 3 types of logical reasoning we can use and should learn.

Deductive Reasoning: Creating specific and true conclusions based on general rules.

Frank is a cat, all cats have brains, frank has a brain.

Inductive Reasoning: Coming to a general conclusion based on specific observations.

Some medical vehicles in Canada have checkered, reflective stickers as well as sirens. We can assume what is and isn't an ambulance in other countries when we see one, despite never seeing them before.

Abductive Reasoning: Coming to the most likely conclusion based on incomplete evidence.

There was a postcard from Italy in my mail box, the only person I know in Italy was my mom who was there a month ago. This card is probably from her and got delayed in the mail.

Purpose: With the improvement of your logical reasoning, you will start developing the ability to quickly come to accurate/likely objective conclusions, resulting in better decision-making. This is also the secret to "traditional" intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence:

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to understand and manage emotions, your own and others, in a healthy way. Emotions play a key role in nearly any

decision we make, so knowing how it may affect others, how others may affect us, and how we may affect ourselves is an important detail to consider.

Emotions and its Effect on a Decision

You: To make a solid plan, you need to think about your capabilities - physically, mentally, and emotionally, as well as the consequences. The most common mistake I see in people who keep failing is not understanding their own limits. In the gym, I have met many people who have tried losing weight. Each time they try, they tell themselves, “Okay, I have to be serious this time and just do it”. Once they fail, they blame themselves for lacking discipline. Understanding in this instance would mean identifying that all your plans that involve “just doing it” don't work because you lack the willpower to force yourself to do something you don't want to do. The solution? Improve willpower (a topic for another time) or come up with a plan that works with your lack of discipline (make it something you want to do, make it more fun and appealing to you).

Once you know your limitations and accept them, you'll be better at taking your weaknesses and strengths into account. Remember, having no weakness is not possible, so embrace your weaknesses and work with them, not against them.

Side Note: *Willpower* and *discipline* are important skills to develop, but shouldn't be relied upon for long-term activities. Discipline to get yourself to the gym on days you don't feel like it is great. Using it every day because you never want to go is exhausting and will cause burnout. The need for willpower and discipline is only required when you don't want to do something, so a life rooted in this is most likely a miserable one.

Those who can do the things you don't want to do probably don't have much more willpower than you; they probably want to do it due to some other motivation.

Most people's failure comes from this misunderstanding. Don't keep trying to force productivity in a way that doesn't work for you. It hasn't worked this far, and it won't anytime soon.

Everyone Else: It should be in your best interest to come up with a plan that doesn't negatively affect those around you. Making a decision that could hurt your family, friends, or strangers is unkind and selfish. On the other hand, if the situation requires that kind of sacrifice, you may have to make it.

Putting Others First Example

If you are overwhelmed by the world, should you hide, run away, or stay where you are? Many people struggling with mental health may seek isolation, but that can result in your loved ones missing you, feeling left out, or even feeling unwanted by you. Some of these loved ones may even become angry or annoyed because they “aren’t enough for you.” However, if you stay and ignore your need for peace, you’ll be neglecting yourself. The answer in this scenario is balance and communication. You can still have more time, but give your loved ones a heads-up and let them help once in a while. This doesn’t guarantee their understanding, but it does make the decision easier, especially if some of those people do understand and provide extra support.

Putting You First Example:

The other possibility is acknowledging how others may interfere with your plans. If your plan can easily be knocked off course by others, you may have crafted a poor plan. In this case, identifying obstacles and planning for those distractions or problems can help you be better prepared when they hit. If we seek isolation to recollect ourselves and improve our mental health, but that isolation has made our family angry with us, our mental health will only get worse. Plan for these problems by providing extra communication for those who need it. You can also plan for these problems by simply expecting them. If you know your family will get upset, communicate (for them) and ignore

them (for you). Easier said than done, but this is where understanding comes into play.

If you know why someone is mad, you can relate, and when you can relate, you can shift your attitude towards them. Example — I have made my dad upset in the past by not wanting to go to a party. He thought I was being too reclusive, but instead of getting mad at him, I just ignored it. I saw where he was coming from, and I knew it was a place of love, so it didn't bother me too much.

Purpose: With the improvement of your emotional intelligence, you will start developing the ability to quickly identify the mental and emotional consequences of certain actions, resulting in better decision-making.

Side Note: Another thing to take into consideration is how society and the people around you affect your decision-making through judgment. There may be certain decisions you want to make, but you fear injuring your reputation. Remember, if it doesn't hurt them, just be you and own it with confidence. Confidence is the key — look at Henry Cavill, a handsome and intelligent man who is adored by women and respected by men; he is also a big nerd and carries that title with confidence.

Creativity:

Creativity is the development of concepts that you can turn into reality. This skill allows you to transform information into a solution for your specific situation. Here we can come up with ideas that will make everyone say, “Whoa, I didn’t even think of that.”

Creativity in its truest form is the ability to think of what hasn’t been thought of before, which is arguably impossible. To be truly creative is to be God. So, what creativity is for us is more along the lines of synthesising something “new”. In other words, get some inspiration. Look at other people's plans and see how they found the solution to the same problems you're going through. Look for issues opposite to yours and compare. Look for anything that can inspire you. Those who are creative have done a lot of conscious experiencing; they then take all of those experiences and start connecting them to make “new” ideas. Everything around you, everything, was inspired by something.

Going back to the mental health example, you’d go looking for other people who had the same problem but fixed it. If you find a few different examples, each with separate solutions, and play around with them, you could develop a unique yet similar solution for your issue. You’ll be creative to those who can’t see your references and intelligent to those who can.

Side Note: Creativity is intelligence; the ability to take different and similar experiences and then connect and apply them to your own life is not just creative, it's smart, very smart.

Purpose: The ability to identify and understand other people's experiences will help you avoid making common mistakes without the need to experience them yourself.

—

These three skills will provide you with a deeper understanding of any situation. You'll see the obvious, understand the people around you, along with your emotions and personality, and you'll be able to recall previous solutions to use as a reference. The only condition now is to do all of this consciously. When you plan, don't half-ass it; sit down, write it down, think it through, do research, and make a smart decision. Don't try doing this in your head until you're good enough on paper.

If you'd like to learn more on Logic, Emotional Intelligence, and Creativity, go to *Skills and Exercises*.

PLAN EXAMPLE

This example has only two possible options instead of several. Using the information gathered in the *Assess* stage, I was able to deduce the logical answer. Then I identified the obstacles I would face trying to follow through with this answer. Once they were identified, I created a plan to overcome them and succeed.

With that, I had the logical answer, the obstacles I may face and their solutions, and a step-by-step plan to succeed.

CONTINUE THE BIG BOOK OR START A SMALLER ONE?

LOGICAL ANSWER:

IF THERE IS A FEAR OF FAILURE AND A BELIEF THAT I LACK SKILL THEN I SHOULD DO THE SMALLER ONE FIRST.

- I WOULD GET EXPERIENCE
 - IF I CAN'T WRITE A SMALLER ONE THEN I WOULDN'T BE CAPABLE OF WRITING A LARGER ONE.
 - MY GOAL IS TO WRITE A BOOK, THIS IS THE QUICKEST OPTION WHICH COULD BOOST CONFIDENCE.
 - I HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE EITHER WAY + IT IS A MORE RELAXED EXPERIENCE.
-

AVOID FAILURE

TIMELINE: END OF YEAR (4 MONTHS)

- ALLOWS FOR NO TIME TO OVERTHINK.

CONTINUE THE BIG BOOK OR START A SMALLER ONE?

STEPS :

- ① IN POINT FORM, WRITE OUT IDEAS.
- ② BEGIN WRITING BLINDLY.
- ③ DEVELOP STRUCTURE AS I GO ON.
- YOU'LL FIND IT ALONG THE WAY.
- ④ WHEN TIRED, REST. IT IS A HOBBY
NOT A JOB.
- THIS WILL PROTECT PASSION
- ⑤ DO NOT QUIT UNTIL YOU ARE HOLDING
THE BOOK IN YOUR HANDS.
- THIS BOOK WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED
UNLESS I CHOSE TO AFTER COMPLETE.

* BE EXCITED TO MAKE SOMETHING.

AFTER IT IS COMPLETED YOU'LL HAVE
THE CONFIDENCE AND THE BOOK YOU DESIRED.

Decide

The decision is where you make your choice. Unless the answer you are looking for is for a specific fact-based question, there will probably be multiple correct answers and multiple wrong answers when making a decision. Sometimes, you'll be stuck with a negative outcome no matter what you choose. Either way, there is no work to be done at this stage. If we want to make better decisions, we will need to improve the assessment and planning stages, as well as our reflection abilities in the *Decision Reflection*.

DECIDE EXAMPLE

Here I make my decision followed by some points to remember about the choice.

Reminder: Adjust the *Decision-Making Process* as needed. Write your notes in a way that is compatible with your thought process. You don't have to follow these examples exactly as they are shown.

CONTINUE THE BIG BOOK OR
START A SMALLER ONE?

I WILL MAKE A SMALLER BOOK
FIRST.

I WILL WRITE ABOUT OVERTHINKING AS
IT IS FRESH IN MY MIND.

THERE ARE NO EXPECTATIONS OTHER
THAN COMPLETION.

IT IS MEANT TO BE DONE
QUICK.

THE POINT IS NOT TO WRITE A
BOOK, IT IS TO COMPLETE
SOMETHING.

Review

After doing all that work you'll want to get this thing over with, but you'll have to be patient as there is more to do. Before you commit, you'll review your decision and how you got to it. Chances are, you had a lot of factors to consider and oftentimes, all of those thoughts get jumbled together, resulting in clouded judgment. The review stage gives you the opportunity to go back to the assess and plan stage to check your work. Here's how we will do that.

1. Answer these questions again:
 - a. What is the best case scenario you are hoping for?
 - b. What is the worst case scenario?
2. Keep those answers in mind and answer these questions as you review your work:
 - a. Who is being affected by this?
 - b. Is this a logical answer? If not, why did I choose it?
 - c. Would I suggest this plan to someone else?
 - d. Can I follow through? (Did I keep my weaknesses in mind?)
3. Optional - Ask someone competent and that you trust to look it over.

Upon completion, you'll be left with three possible feelings about your decision: confidence (or something close to it), uncertainty, or defeat. Each one will call for a different response.

Confidence:

Confidence comes from knowing you've done your best with what you had. You are ready to take action.

Uncertainty:

You have no idea if you did well or not, but your mind cannot accept this and wants full control. To avoid feeling uncertain about the decisions you make you'll either need to become more knowledgeable on the topic or familiarize yourself with failure. Fortunately, you can improve this, but I warn you, it involves a lot of trust.

Incredibly Important Decisions

With no room for failure, try asking for help and guidance from several people who have experience with this situation, then take the average answer and follow through with that. Doing this means you aren't entirely making the decision yourself because you are using other people's assessments and planning instead of your own. If you find good people, they'll do just fine. After, proceed to the *Decision Reflection* and pick apart what worked and what didn't so you're prepared next time.

Regular Decision

Pick the option that seems to cause little to no damage if it were to go wrong and commit to that. Again, the *Decision Reflection* is where you can pick apart everything in hindsight and see what did and didn't work. Learning from your mistakes is one of the best ways to learn but does involve actually making

mistakes. This is where that trust comes in; you have to take the leap of faith, accept the consequences, and learn from it.

Defeated:

If you are feeling defeated, this means you know (or think you do) that your decision is a bad one. You believe that you fumbled the *Decision-Making Process*, which will lead to stress and anxiety. You know you can't follow through with this decision but you also don't want to start back at square one, you're tired. This same feeling of writing a test in school and knowing you have no idea what is going on, handing in that paper is just accepting defeat — you don't know the answers but you know it's all wrong. It is in that moment where you realize "I should have studied more, I wasted my time." Guess what? This isn't a test, you don't have to hand in the sheet with a bunch of made up answers, we can start over, we can study, we can do better.

Side Note: In the case of a *Regular Decision*, you could commit, accept failure, and see what worked and what didn't. Since the consequences of failure aren't that big of a deal, you'll be okay.

REVIEW EXAMPLE

Reviewing does not require writing. In my example, I go back to my sheets and simply check it over. I asked for some advice from others as well.

Repeat

Here, we acknowledge the need to go back to the beginning. This is what you imagine when you think about overthinking a decision. You can overthink each stage, but strategic individuals who overthink an entire decision are guilty of using the *Repeat* step too many times. This step is not inherently bad, but it isn't efficient to go through it too many times. There are two options you have once you get to this stage: repeat the process, or don't.

When to Repeat the Process:

This may seem like a hard question to answer, but it's a bit easier than you'd think. You'll want to repeat the process when:

- The decision is important to get right, and you know for a fact that your current decision is wrong.
- New information is presented to you that must be taken into consideration.

Your Decision is Wrong

If your decision is wrong, it is because you didn't do the process well. Maybe you were in the wrong frame of mind (clouded by emotion) or maybe you gained clarity by running through the process. You'll have to restart. Remember: You'll either need to practice the *Decision-Making Process* and try

again, or you'll need to find someone you trust to help. Choosing whether the decision is urgent or not will be the only factor to consider. Regardless, I would encourage you to practice the *Decision-Making Process* either way.

Example: You are contemplating breaking up with your partner. You have had several arguments in the last few weeks, and everything is feeling tense. You don't know if you are being over dramatic or not, after all, healthy couples are supposed to argue. You decide to break up, but you follow through, and you realize it still isn't sitting right. You can do one of three things: Speak with a therapist and ask for some guidance — help from others, or do some more research on what healthy couples do to get over these hurdles, then go back through the process with more detail to find the answer — practice, or you can do both. Decisions like this may never feel like the right move, but you'll understand it all in hindsight (more on this in a bit).

New Information is Presented

If you've made your decision, but then new and important information arises, you'll need to redo the process. This can be frustrating, but there is no alternative.

Example: You've come up with a meal plan for your dinner party. You take everyone's allergies and preferences into consideration and make the perfect

lineup, grocery list, and schedule. Soon after, you find out that one of your friends' children has an allergy to cranberries. Well, you had planned for a cranberry sauce with the turkey, as well as a cranberry tart, but now you'll have to go back and think of something else that will satisfy your party.

When to Not Repeat the Process:

Although this is the harder option, it can be the most eye-opening. This is where a large portion of people lie, the purgatory of decision-making. Anxiety, fear, and stress can paralyze you here, and the smarter you are, the worse it can get. You see, intelligent people are analytical and incredible at reviewing multiple scenarios, outcomes, and options, but when you tell them to pick one, they freeze. Why? Because they can identify the wrong moves but not the best move. Human brains are straightforward; like a computer, in ones and zeros, wrong and right, black and white, yes or no. The world we live in doesn't work that way. The solution to this problem is a simple perspective change; there is no best move.

We strive for perfection and for control. We want everything to work out well, and it can, but probably not in the way you want. Smart people will get left in the dust by "less intelligent" people because they do less thinking and more doing. Have you ever met someone who had more success than you did? Someone who wasn't as clever? They spend less time thinking and prefer to take action. Through those actions, they make plenty of mistakes, but they

learn from them, and before they know it, they find success. Smarter people spend more time in their heads; you can experience a lot there, but without action, nothing will happen. So how can we make taking action easier? Translate.

If our brains need control, we will take the world's randomness and create some structure. There is only one thing we can control, and that is our brain. Our brain allows us to perceive, and that means we can adjust our perception of the world. We can take failure and normalize it, we can learn faster and take more action, all while feeling less stressed.

In 2011, Denzel Washington gave his famous Fall Forward speech at the University of Pennsylvania. Falling forward is the opposite, more optimistic view of falling back on something. Falling back means to fail your Plan A and go to Plan B. Falling forward has no failure, just redirection. To give a fitting example, let's say you wanted to be an actor, but you don't know if you can make it. You then try for a couple of months to get some auditions, but you never get called back. You run out of savings, and you think you've failed; perhaps you should have become an accountant, as your mom told you. That would be Plan B. No, instead, you redirect. When approaching an obstacle others would call failure, you refine the plan. Maybe you fail again, now it's been six months, but you've had two small commercials. You fell forward. The point here is that failing is not the negative, permanent outcome to a plan;

failing is part of the plan. Fall in love with failure, anticipate it, and learn. You do have more control than you think, but it isn't control of the world; it's control of your own perception of it.

We went over a lot. Let's recap: If the decision isn't the biggest thing in the world, try taking that leap of faith. From there, you will either succeed or fall forward (not fail). If it is a big deal, ask for some help and do some more research yourself. If you are clouded by emotion, work with people you trust to shine some light on the situation.

Side Note: See the *Skills and Exercise* section to find some helpful methods to improve your perception of failure.

ACTION

It may be scary, but success is on the other side of action. Commit and be open to the lessons it holds. Stay where you are and watch time and opportunities fly away, leaving you behind. I, too, was afraid of commitment until I discovered the *Trust Period*.

The *Trust Period* is the truce between the anxious self and the determined self used for decisions that require more time to unfold. During this time, doubt and stress can creep back in when the motivation is gone. The *Trust Period* begins after making a decision, and it is only after this period that you can decide to give up or abandon a decision.

Recently, my sister began an online art college. A couple of weeks in, she was talking to me about being stressed and unsure if this was what she wanted to do. She seemed to have made up her mind and was looking for permission to pull the plug. Instead, I reminded her of the plan she had made months ago; you complete the three years of school and one year of work before deciding to quit. It was better to be four years on with a degree than empty-handed. We both know that too many young people (myself included) have been

struggling with commitment, so we had to be prepared for those moments. In this case, those four years of commitment were the *Trust Period*.

You may be thinking “the four years of trust period IS the commitment part”, but you are missing something. Commitment is scary when it feels permanent. My sister believed that committing to this school meant committing to the career for life, but she had an exit built into the plan, a safety net. The same applies to short-term decisions; if you are afraid of going on stage to speak to hundreds, you are concerned about the potential damage it may do to your reputation and ego.* The *Trust Period* gives you a guilt-free exit out of a decision, the ejection seat to a decision. It is a reminder for Current-You to *trust* the plan and actions of Past-You, with the comfort of knowing that committing now doesn't have to mean forever.

*See the *Skills and Exercises* Section to improve your perception of failure

Side Note: This is The Point

If you are afraid of wasting time, here is a helpful reminder: being alive means living, and living requires experiencing. It shouldn't be all about the money; it should be about the memories, community, and accomplishments. It shouldn't be about the degree, but the friends, perseverance, and the fun.

When you are shoveling the snow on a Sunday morning, that is living. When you are enjoying a TV show, that is living. When you are going back to school at fifty-five, that is living. When you feel lost and are trying to find yourself in your twenties, that is living.

Remember: You have nothing better to do than live. Success will come when you stop chasing the accolades and start chasing the experiences.

POST-DECISION: REFLECTION

Every action comes with consequences. The bigger the action, the bigger the consequences. The *Post-Decision* stage consists of one step: *Reflection*. *Reflection* is the act of carefully reviewing your thoughts, actions, and experiences. It is my favourite part of the *Decision-Making Process* because this is where we can freely think without needing to make a decision quickly. In this chapter, we will break down the information we receive after our decision to improve our decision-making abilities in the future.

Overthinking in this stage is called *Negative Manifestation/Rumination* - essentially turning the *Reflection* stage into a self-sabotaging psychological massacre in your mind.

Reminder:

Manifestation is the process of turning your desires, ideas, and goals into reality by constantly believing, thinking, and working on them.

Negative manifestation is the focus on negative consequences and outcomes, leading to the perception or even the reality of those thoughts.

Rumination is deeply thinking about the past or present in a negative way. In other words, you'll find what you are looking for — make sure you are looking for the right thing.

The consequences of a decision will teach us to either repeat that process or not. The problem here is that without conscious reflection, we will rely solely on our feelings, which is quite animalistic. Our feelings are wildly simple — if it felt good, then you'll do it again, if it felt bad, then you won't. So what happens if we do something that feels good now but leads to negative feelings later?

Think of a dog; if your dog pees on a rug while you're at work and hours later you come back to punish him for it, he'll be totally confused as to why he's being punished, but if you punish him as he's doing it, he'll connect the dots and understand, "what I am doing is bad." Humans are the same. If you are eating fast food because it feels good at the moment, you probably aren't thinking about the future consequences, such as fatigue, acne, weight gain, and the development of chronic illnesses. The same is also true the other way around. When you avoid doing something that makes you feel bad now, but will actually make you feel good later, such as exercising, doing chores, or working hard for a promotion. This is what happens when we let our emotions take control. The same is true with using only our brains and logic; it isn't uncommon to see an intelligent person lack empathy or emotional

common sense. Our emotions and brain must work together with equal power; you should only lean into one more when certain situations require it, but how do we do that?

How to Reflect

Reflecting isn't as hard as you may believe, but like all thinking it can help to write it down. To reflect, we will use your *Pre-Decision* notes to observe the two main outcomes: Emotions and Results.

Result → Emotion:

As mentioned, every action leads to an emotion. It is crucial to identify this and see where you emotionally stand with certain situations and outcomes. We will consider our feelings because all of this is to feel and live better anyway.

The Results will be one of four things: positive, negative, neutral, or mixed.

Emotion will also be one of four things: positive, negative, neutral, or mixed.

Comparing these will allow us to understand our minds better as well as determine how grounded with reality we are. If you worked hard and

accomplished your big financial goal of making a million dollars in a year but had to work so hard that you neglected your health, you'll take that information and ask, "Was the million dollars worth it? Should I lower it a bit so I can be healthier? Is it possible to accomplish this whilst being healthy?" Identifying how an outcome made you feel will be vital in understanding your mind and attitude. Let's review some examples.

Good Result but Bad Feeling

If you find that objectively positive outcomes, such as going to the gym, produce negative emotions, you will want to either find alternatives or adjust your attitude.

Bad Result but Good Feeling

An outcome makes you feel good, but actually produces negative outcomes. Like eating junk food, you may want to learn more and partake in moderation, or you could adjust your attitude toward junk food as well.

Good Result and Good Feeling

Another helpful observation is the discovery of something that is objectively good and feels good too. Perhaps you struggle to go to the gym because you dislike it, but enjoy drinking your coffee afterwards. Use that feeling to improve the overall experience of working out. Many gym-goers find

enjoyment from more than just their workouts, such as their clothes, their personal time, the post-workout meal, or the feeling of accomplishment.

Neutral Results

Most of life is neutral experiences, and there is nothing wrong with that. A neutral experience means you don't have negative or positive feelings about it; it's just like brushing your teeth, putting on your socks, or driving to work. A neutral result should be seen as a positive solely because it isn't negative.

Mixed Results

Mixed results are complicated but can still be divided into good and bad when you look close enough. Grief is an example of this. Grieving the end of a toxic relationship or the loss of a loved one who was suffering is bittersweet. The *Decision-Making Process* will not help with this, unless you had a decision to make, but reflecting is always important.

Compare your emotions with the result to determine your next moves.

Hypothesis → Result:

This is a way to improve your future decision-making. You will take your result and create a hypothesis for how it occurred, and then review your notes

and thought process to see if you are right. Doing this will improve your ability to see the consequences and domino effect of an action, like seeing into the future.

Here is an example, if you completed the school year without making any friends, we can hypothesize that you are either;

1. Not Likeable
2. Didn't Prioritize Making Friends
3. Have Social Anxiety

You'd use other pieces of information to refine your hypothesis as well, such as: having good grades may mean you spent a lot of time working, or you went through a tough time with a family member, so you weren't in the headspace for friends. You take all of this information, then guess as to why you never made any friends. Once you start looking back throughout the year (mentally), you may begin to notice all the reasons why you didn't make those friends. You may notice that you were invited to parties but never went or that you judged everyone who approached you harshly, or maybe you spent too many nights playing video games instead of going out.

Doing something like this can take some time, but unraveling the human brain isn't really considered a quick task. Once you improve, you'll be able to

apply it to making decisions. Using the school example again, if you go back next year with the same goal of making friends, you'll be smart enough to avoid making all the same mistakes.

—

This can be a confusing topic to some, so let's ultra-simplify this:

1. You are going to find all of the obstacles that prevented you from succeeding, and then you'll anticipate them next time.
2. You will find all the advantages that helped you succeed, and then you'll utilize them again next time.

Professional athletes do this too. For example, a boxer will watch their opponent's previous fight footage months before their fight to uncover their weaknesses and strengths. Using this, they create a game plan around that information. If their opponent leaves their head exposed when throwing a jab, then they can use that to determine when to strike.

The Foundation for Reflection

Now, the foundation for all of this exploration is asking why? Every time you ask why, you stick your shovel into the ground and dig deeper. The deeper you go, the more we reveal. Once we feel like we know enough, we can make some changes. As you know, before writing this book, I was meant to finish a different one that I hoped to publish. At that point, I had spent one year trying to write it, but I felt like I wasn't moving quickly enough — I was too unsure. Below is my own internal dialogue on this topic spanning weeks. This dialogue takes place between Lost-Me and Strategic-Me. Strategic-Me will utilize Reflection (past experiences) to uncover the best course of action (make a decision).

Lost-Me: Has no idea what is going on; he only feels.

Strategic-Me: Intelligent and idealistic, a strategist.

These versions of me need each other; one provides emotional guidance while the other provides intelligence.

Lost-Me: I can't accomplish my goals, and I don't know why.

Strategic-Me: What are your goals?

Lost-Me: I want to write a book.

Strategic-Me: Why do you want to write a book?

Lost-Me: Because it would be fun.

Strategic-Me: That's all? Really?

Lost-Me: I want my thoughts to be on paper, something I can hold, something that feels real.

Strategic-Me: Seems like a good goal. What have you done to accomplish this?

Lost-Me: I write sometimes, but I keep changing what I write, and it feels like I am going in circles.

Strategic-Me: Do you like what you write?

Lost-Me: I do, but the structure feels wrong.

Strategic-Me: Have you tried organising your thoughts on paper?

Lost-Me: Yes, of course I have.

Strategic-Me: Where are these papers?

Lost-Me: Well, they are just written on loose sheets at the moment.

Strategic-Me: So you haven't actually taken the time to organise it all?

Lost-Me: I guess not. I don't know, I feel like I have so many ideas. Too many ideas.

Strategic-Me: Are you searching for perfection?

Lost-Me: Well, I want it to be good, I want to release this in book stores.

Strategic-Me: Based on previous goals in your life, you have the tendency to quit right after committing. You had the goal of creating a personal training business, and you literally did everything, but as soon as you had to commit to building a client list, you quit. You've done this before, too. Why?

Lost-Me: I have never noticed that. I have no idea.

Strategic-Me: Seems like fear, but it could also be finding out it wasn't what you wanted. Any of that sounds right?

Lost-Me: Yeah, probably. Never thought about the fear bit though.

Strategic-Me: You have big goals, fear can come from creating something and being afraid of the judgment. A critique of something this personal may feel like a critique of your intelligence.

Lost-Me: Holy \$%&#, you're right.

Strategic-Me: Do you think you are going to feel like quitting after writing this book?

Lost-Me: I don't know, not at the moment.

Strategic-Me: Well, you've done it before, maybe it's time to try something new. Repeating old habits, hoping for a different outcome, is unwise. Any thoughts?

Lost-Me: Hmm. I thought I was writing this book for fun, but it turned into a large and personal story I wanted to share with the world. Should I try something fun that doesn't feel so big?

Strategic-Me: Great idea, a smaller book you can make quickly, just for fun. Is there anything you couldn't fit into your current book that you wanted to talk about?

Lost-Me: Literally so much. I am currently fascinated by this solution to overthinking. At this very moment, I have been having fun with this.

Strategic-Me: Okay, so overthinking it is. What are the goals?

Lost-Me: Okay, I want to get it done before 2026, so in three months, and I want to print it out and share it with my friends.

Strategic-Me: Okay, so no publishing, no stress, just fun. A nice short book. What will you do when the feeling of quitting comes up again, as it gets close to being a reality?

Lost-Me: I thought this plan was to stop that. Why would that happen?

Strategic-Me: The plan is to create something that is less personal so you can finally say you've accomplished something. Make a small book, feel what it feels like to do it all, then you can do the real thing with more confidence. You are taking baby steps. Does that make sense?

Lost-Me: So I am doing this to see what full commitment tastes like, by doing something less scary?

Strategic-Me: Yes, exactly. Write this small book, and the bigger one will be less daunting. So, what will you do when it happens?

Lost-Me: Oh, right, um, I don't know.

Strategic-Me: You are going to remember this conversation. You are going to tell yourself, "My brain is doing this because it is scared, you have to trust that it'll be okay. Success is on the other side of discomfort, and success for me is just making something I am proud of." Besides, if you don't like it, don't share it; it's not a big deal. Okay?

Lost-Me: This in itself is scary.

Strategic-Me: Then do it scared.

And I got scared as Strategic-Me predicted. And I did what Strategic-Me said, I finally committed. That entire conversation was the internal dialogue version of the *Decision-Making Process* with a focus on *Reflection*. I determined the problem and the obstacles by referencing past mistakes, then developed a plan with a *Trust Period*. This has been the most helpful thing I started doing. As a beginner, use a piece of paper to help; as you improve, you can do it internally.

Talking to Yourself

Talking to yourself (in your head or out loud) has been proven to be helpful in calming yourself and collecting your thoughts. You begin to view yourself as a person and even treat yourself with more respect. The collaboration between logic and emotion allows us to find a balance. Most of us will read this exchange and relate closely to the Lost version. Use the logical version of you to suggest the things you are afraid to suggest, like the rude but correct things and the challenging but positive things. Eventually, you'll get so good you can shift between the logical and the emotional versions when needed, while being able to use them both at the same time to make decisions. More on this in the *Skills and Exercises* section.

If this still feels too overwhelming or you don't yet know what to specifically do to start making a change in your life, keep reading. The next few pages should help.

Advice for Fighting the Demons

This marks the end of the *Reflection* stage and the entire *Decision Making Process* altogether. The *Pre-Decision* helps you to create a solid plan to make a good decision, and the *Post-Decision* will help you understand what you want in life (what makes you feel good and what doesn't) and how to identify patterns to

see better results when making future decisions. The cycle of thinking, doing, and learning. Growth.

Despite having all of these resources, you may still struggle due to the influence of “old programming.” The programming that was instilled into you during your childhood. Programming that tells you that you aren’t enough, that you can’t trust anyone, that the world is a terrible place with nothing but disappointment. When someone who struggles with this attempts to use logic, such as in the *Decision Making Process*, their brain may still default to that old programming. This goes a bit deeper than regular overthinking, but there is something I can recommend: see a professional. We all need community and guidance; it is in our nature. We see doctors for our physical health, so why not our mental health? Speaking to someone will make this adventure easier, so don’t be afraid to look for help. Remember, you can work on yourself and receive some guidance at the same time.

COMMON ISSUES AND ATTITUDE CHANGES

Now that you have learned the entire *Decision-Making Process*, let's go over some of the most commonly overthought topics. The goal of this chapter is to get you started on your approach to the hardest decisions using the *Decision-Making Process*. For each topic, we will identify the problem, the overall goal, questions you can use to get started, and a conclusion.

Overthinking Stress (Financial)

Problem: Stress is an instinct required to stay alive. For most animals, stress is used to escape immediate danger, such as a lion attack. Now, you can sense “danger” from afar, leading to longer bouts of stress, such as the loss of your job.

Goals: Prepare for the possibility of financial failure and create a plan to improve security.

Asset & Planning Points to Consider:

Should I get another degree?

Do I need to go to school?

Am I willing to do what it takes to succeed?

What sacrifices will I have to make to succeed?

Do I have a family to support? Who is relying on me?

Am I taking this seriously enough?

Is an addiction stopping me from growing? (Drugs, video games, alcohol)

Can a financial advisor help me?

Should I change my career?

Can I afford to invest in education?

Am I wasting money?

Do I buy useless stuff?

Does mental health slow me down? Should I see a therapist?

Am I just lazy?

Do I want security, or am I chasing approval from others?

Am I refusing to grow because I am afraid of failure?

Are my expectations of financial freedom unnecessarily high?

Am I too high-maintenance?

Am I being positive?

Conclusion: If you want to avoid overthinking your financial situation: take it seriously, get help, make a plan, put on a mean game face*, be prepared for pain and dirt, and be positive.

*Check out the *Skills and Exercises* section for more on Game Face.

Overthinking People (Relationships and Arguments)

Problem: Overthinking arguments means that you are upset or frustrated with one or more people, but want to solve the problem; however, you don't know what to do. If you and this person argue too often, you may feel even more pressure to take action. Burning bridges can be scary, and really, you just want everything to work out well.

Goals: Discover and understand your opposition's why', learn to control your own emotions, and improve communication.

Assets & Planning:

Understanding Them:

Why are they upset?

Did they ever learn how to express themselves? Should I be pitiful?

What are their intentions?

Are they having a bad day?

What are their trigger words? (positive and negative)

What do they want from me?

What is their best-case scenario?

What can I do to build trust with them?

Do I owe them an apology?

Understanding You:

Do I struggle to understand other people's emotions?

Am I too soft and get insulted easily?

Can I read social queues?

Am I rude when I am in a bad mood?

Do I defend myself when I am insulted, no matter what?

Do I have unrealistic standards for people?

Do I struggle to communicate how I feel, then get annoyed when no one notices?

Do I run from difficult conversations?

Do I know when to move on from a relationship?

Can my close friends or family help me figure out my flaws?

Do I naturally speak in an annoying or aggressive tone?

Conclusion: If you want to avoid overthinking your relationships, remember to fully understand the opposition's side and where they are coming from, always remain focused on the solution, never use personal insults, improve your communication, control your emotions, and walk away when needed.

Overthinking Mental Health

Problem: Some say mental health issues have risen greatly in the last twenty years; I say it has always been around, just hidden in different forms. For someone like me, overthinking your mental health means you are doing too much dwelling and not enough understanding.

Goals: Understand why you feel the way you do (your beliefs and perception of the world), then find out how you can adjust your mentality to feel better.

Asset & Planning Point:

What are your major complaints with the world?

What are your major complaints with yourself?

What are your major complaints with your family and friends?

How did other people handle this?

Why do you think the way that you do? Who taught you?

What is it that you want from the world?

Does anything make you happy?

What are the things in your life that feel okay? Not good but not bad.

Would helping other people help you?

Do you try doing new things regularly?

How can you use your "disabilities" as strengths instead?

Are you trying to be someone you're not?

Do you need a change of scenery?

Who did you admire growing up?

What can you fix about yourself?

Do you believe it is impossible to improve despite knowing others have?

Are you trying hard enough?

Could you fake happiness and see if that helps make it authentic?

Do you know what life is supposed to feel like? Do you think your expectations of life are unfairly high?

Conclusion: If you want to avoid overthinking your mental health, you'll need to be solution-focused, understand the origin of your emotions, start fighting back, find others to help, and don't give up. Your mind is not broken; you just aren't using it the way it was designed to be used, just as a lion wouldn't survive in the ocean.

Overthinking Time (Aging and Purpose)

Problem: Our one life can make many worried that they are not doing enough. We want to be happy, relax, be successful, have a family, and engage in positive experiences, but we are also fearful that our time will run out too quickly. It doesn't help that we spend a little too much of it thinking about how soon everything we once knew will be gone.

Goals: Learn how to truly live in the moment.

Asset & Planning Point:

Do I create goals? Do I ever accomplish them?

How many years have I wasted not accomplishing anything?

What have I accomplished?

Do I take care of my body? Exercise, eat well?

Do I learn from my mistakes?

Do I write down my goals and actively try to accomplish them?

Do I make too many goals?

Do I fail over and over again? Why?

Do addictions distract me? (drugs, alcohol, video games, partying)

Do I have a healthy balance of work and play?

Do I often go on vacations and trips? Do I know the benefits?

What is a fulfilling life to me?

Am I too focused on other people's lives?

Do I compare myself with successful people too much?

Do I acknowledge all of the good moments in my life? Do I write them down or talk about them at the end of the day?

Do I have any hobbies?

Do I focus too much on work and not enough on my hobbies?

Do I think money is more important than enjoying my time?

Do I focus on enjoying present moments?

Do I ruin good moments with negative thoughts?

Are there any positive memories that I have now but hated in the moment?

What are my fondest memories? Do I feel the same now?

Have I dulled down my life too much? Do I believe fun is just for children?

Do I try too hard to be serious instead of playful?

What do others think about my personality? Do I seem fun or exciting?

Am I lazy, but want everything hand-delivered to me for free?

Conclusion: Living a good life means living it, not just thinking it. If you want to stop overthinking your time, focus on the now, do the things you love, work hard on the things that matter to you, and remember that anything you do, including chores, yard work, or your career, IS living and experiencing, so enjoy it.

Overthinking Productivity

Problem: Avoiding our responsibilities or even desires because we are afraid, lazy, or tired is quite common. Those who lack productivity usually lag in life due to distractions such as addiction or fear.

Goals: Identify your addiction (distractions) and fears and conquer them so you can accomplish your other goals.

Asset & Planning Point:

Do I spend enough time writing out plans to accomplish my goals?

Has my addiction affected my brain negatively? Bored or distracted easily?

Can I quit this addiction cold turkey? (Not recommended for drugs or alcohol)

Should I see someone to help me out?

Am I afraid of being judged?

Am I afraid of trying hard and failing?

How can I change my attitude to respond to failure and mistakes more positively?

Do I have an alcohol or drug addiction?

Do I have a video game addiction?

Am I addicted to my phone?

Am I addicted to something good for me? Working out, being healthy?

Why am I addicted? Why did this start?

What does my addiction help me with? (loneliness, anxiety) What can I replace it with?

Do I recognize that failing and doing is the whole experience and should be enjoyed?

Why do I think I will fail? Does the goal involve luck or just skill?

What do I need to learn to improve my productivity?

Can my family help me become more productive?

Conclusion: If you want to stop overthinking your goals and tasks, you'll need to identify your addictions, fears, and any other barriers. You'll then need to make some sacrifices by quitting/solving those distractions, while improving your attitude towards the work you have to do.

Overthinking Community

Problem: Fearing judgment from our community can cause significant stress for some. We fear that we are not enough in some way, whether that be in intelligence, likability, capability, or something else. We hope to be liked and respected because the pursuit of being a valued member of a community is vital in our survival.

Goals: Learn to read others better and develop a positive attitude toward criticism.

Asset & Planning Point:

Do I have trust issues?

Am I overly judgmental of others, and fear that they think the same towards me?

Am I authentically myself to those around me? (People are put off when detecting fakeness.)

Do I struggle with taking criticism?

Can I handle criticism when someone gives it rudely?

Do I like myself?

Do I project my self-dislike onto others?

Am I confident in my identity?

Do I try too hard to impress everyone?

Am I aware that it is literally impossible to be liked by everyone?

Can I accept when someone doesn't like me without then disliking them?

Do I ask for clarification when I am confused about someone's opinion of me?

Do I come off as needy?

Am I trying to gain the approval of someone I don't even approve of?

Am I capable of reading someone's body language accurately?

Why do I want approval?

What am I afraid people will discover about me? Is it even real, or is it fictional?

Conclusion: If you want to stop overthinking your community's perception of you, you'll want to understand if you are correctly deducing their perception of you, if you hold too many negative perceptions of others, if you hold too many negative views of yourself, and why you want their approval in the first place. Remember to become comfortable with being disliked, as it is a guarantee in life.

Notes for this Section:

As you approach these questions, attempt to stay neutral. Do not be negative, or even overly positive. Answer the questions truthfully to achieve the best results. For example, you should not see the question “Do I ever accomplish my goals?” and immediately think “no, never.” That is definitely not true and will make the *Decision-Making Process* pointless. You cannot replicate success if you believe you have never accomplished it.

Remember to ask others close to you for help. Some of the questions you'll be asking will be about yourself, so having an outside person who knows you well will make it easier to avoid certain biases. In some instances, a stranger's first impression of you can also help. For this to work, you will need to do two things:

1. Permit them to be brutally honest and allow them to use any words they wish. This is because not everyone holds the skill to deliver difficult opinions without injuring the other; this permission will allow the truth to come out plainly.

2. Be prepared. Asking this question is like taking an emotional punch to the face, and those who aren't seasoned may feel the pain.

DO NOT get upset with this person; you asked for this. If you believe what they say to be incorrect, debate about it together, but keep an open mind that you may be wrong. Feel free to follow the *Three Person Rule*. Ask a few people the same question (the more the better). If you have three people who say the same thing, there may be some truth to what they say.

If you are hurt by what they said, remember that two things can be true at once. Their criticism may be harsh but it doesn't mean they don't like you, respect you, admire you, or think of you as competent — we all have weaknesses. I have no doubt you have some harsh critiques for all of your favourite people in your life too, and I bet it doesn't change how much you love and respect them. The same is true the other way around. Don't take it too close to heart.

SKILLS AND EXERCISES

As mentioned, overthinking can occur for several reasons, with the primary reason being a desire for control. However, there are certain attitude changes and skills we can acquire that can make overthinking a less prominent occurrence. Exercising, eating well, and even experiencing boredom can all help ease your mind and release some of life's pressures. Social media, constant exposure to the wealthy, and an unrealistic expectation of life that is displayed in television and film can also increase your chances of overthinking.

In the Skills and Exercises chapter, I will challenge you to complete tasks in the specific order below. Each task will focus on a skill that will help you reduce your overthinking. Each skill will be explained, and individual goals will be assigned to you.

Be sure this is something you want to do because if you approach these exercises without believing they work, you'll fail to see the best results or any at all.

BEFORE YOUR START

Each skill will have some other resources to help you understand further. When working on self-development, it is suggested that you pick one or two resources and apply them to your life before you move to another. When we use dozens of resources, they begin to mush together, and we fail to remember important information. In this case, complete each skill's exercises and watch/read each resource several times for better understanding, but only move on to another resource once you feel like you've got it down.

Resource = Articles, videos, podcasts, books, and professional guidance.

i. Positive Self-Talk

Talking out loud is scientifically proven to improve concentration, visual processing, and attitude. People in high-stress job positions, like police officers and surgeons, use self-talk to stay focused in the moment and avoid being trapped in their heads. They actually use self-talk in tandem with team communication. For example, a police officer saying “this room is clear” or a surgeon saying “making the incision” is done to stay focused on the task at hand while communicating with their team, no room for any negative internal dialogue. This means that you aren’t just comforting yourself; you are working with yourself. We should also acknowledge that you already use self-talk, whether that is internal or external. However, our self-talk can oftentimes be extremely negative. Conscious self-talk will obviously focus on remaining positive and trusting yourself, which I like to call Manual Override.

Manual Override means to take back control of your attitude. Your default attitude may be overly negative on a subconscious and/or conscious level. Fortunately, the focus on conscious positivity will aid in taking back control and ultimately rewriting our “default” over time.

Exercise:

Start paying attention to when you are being negative, acknowledge it, and try walking yourself through it as if you were speaking to someone you love.

Start with topics you'll know you'll be hard on yourself with, like eating unhealthy, making a mistake at work or home, or insulting yourself in the mirror. You are going to;

1. Write down what your initial negative thought was.
2. Discover and acknowledge the positives (Use the internet or find someone else's positive perspective if needed).
3. Every time you experience that negative thought, support yourself out loud using those positives.

EXAMPLE

If you are constantly being negative about going to the gym, write down your thoughts, find positive counterarguments or words of encouragement, and write those down beside the negative thoughts. Every time you go to the gym, you will whisper to yourself those counterarguments or positive words of encouragement.

I hate these exercises → *I really feel this, that is good, it means I am making progress.*

I don't want to do this → *I am strong and will do what I have to do to succeed. I won't give up.*

I would rather be at home → *After I am done here, I can enjoy my home time. I am excited about that.*

I hate cardio → *I will watch my TV episode on the treadmill as I planned. You got this.*

I don't have time for this → *Even 20 minutes of intense training will bring me closer to progress, no excuses [your name].*

Everyone is judging me → *Remember, people are in their own world, and even if they were judging, I won't waste my time with negativity. I am here to work hard, let's go [your name].*

I am too fat to go to the gym → *I am here because I love myself, not because I hate myself. Let's focus on losing this weight. I have a goal to accomplish, and I won't be slowed.*

Positive Self-Talk will help you develop confidence in your plans and increase your awareness in the Reflection stage.

LEARN MORE

[Video] TED-Ed: Is it normal to talk to yourself?

[Video] TED Talk: Do You Talk to Yourself? Here's How to Harness Your Inner Voice - Ethan Kross

[Article] Psychology Today: Why Should You Talk To Yourself by Tara Well Ph. D.

2. Accept Responsibility

Accepting responsibility can be challenging for most. Many of us will make mistakes and then blame those mistakes on others or the universe before we look to ourselves. Having the ability to acknowledge that you are responsible for what happens in your life will open up your eyes to the amount of power you truly hold. For example, instead of blaming your high cholesterol on poor genetics, you'll identify your unhealthy habits and accept your mistakes.

Exercise:

1. Take a problem you are experiencing at the moment.
2. Now answer this question positively: What could I have done differently to prevent it?
3. Acknowledge by saying — “If I [alternative action], then I could have prevented [the problem] from happening.”
4. With your new understanding, determine what can be done now to handle the problem.
5. Repeat this two more times with different issues.

Example:

1. My friend and I aren't talking because she's upset that I didn't go to her party.

2. I thought I said it nicely, but she didn't seem to think so. She may even just be upset because it seems like I don't care. I should have said it in a way that she could understand.
3. If I had more kindly explained that I wasn't going, then I could have prevented this argument from happening.
4. I will tell her that I didn't mean to hurt her feelings and ask how I could've delivered the message better next time.

Accepting Responsibility is to understand how much control over your life you truly have. This will lead to better decision making and reflecting.

LEARN MORE

[Video] Minute Videos: Cognitive Biases — the self-serving bias.

[Article] The Decision Lab: Self-serving Bias

3. Strategic Failure

One of my favourite tools. Purposely setting out to do something with guaranteed failure. This skill will help you understand the feeling of failure. Take a martial artist and their training; some of their exercises involve getting comfortable with being hit. They will have their coach punch them in the abs or use a stick to hit their arms, all for the purpose of causing pain (they are not hitting them with 100% power). This is done to get the fighter comfortable with pain and being hit. During combat, they won't be surprised by the feeling of being hit. Strategic failure does something similar, with less hitting.

Exercise:

1. Choose a person you know who is skilled in something that you are bad at.
2. Ask them to teach you that skill and tell them why you are trying to learn (to get used to failure and practice simple enjoyment).
3. You are doing something you are obviously bad at, so you will mentally prepare to fail.
4. Tell this person, "I have no idea what I am doing, but I am going to try my best, go easy on me."
5. If anxious, use this perspective switch; instead of calling it anxiousness, call it excitement. They can feel the same, physically.
6. Enjoy your time with this person.

7. Have fun and try your best; the point is to experience, not master, or even be good.

If you are surprisingly good at this skill, choose another. Feel free to do this as many times as you like and enjoy it. It can be a lot of fun, which is why the adventurous are always trying something new.

Taking part in Strategic Failure will help you improve your relationship with failure which will lead to the ability to push through it and learn from it, ultimately helping you grow.

LEARN MORE

[Article with Video] Psychology Today: Doing Something New Is Good for You, Karyn Hall Ph. D. — video is a TED Talk from Isaac Miller

[Video] TED: Why Having Fun Is the Secret to a Healthier Life by Catherine Price

4. Your Game Face - Mental Toughness

Putting on a game face means leaning into your animal instincts. When a lion roars or a gorilla pounds its chest, they prepare for battle. Animals that are defending themselves will give warning sounds to intimate opponents, their bodies are flooded with adrenaline, and they prepare for the pain. They won't die without a fight. This is the mind of a professional athlete; this is mental toughness. Athletes use this type of self-talk when they train, when they experience hardship, or when they are knocked down. This is why sports ads from Nike are so inspiring, because they tap into the animalistic nature we all have to survive and be at the top of the food chain. Putting on a game face doesn't always mean becoming as crazy as a gorilla; it can also mean becoming as focused as a cheetah, or as witty as a fox. Some may find this weird or even childish but really it's a lack of acceptance that we humans are also animals. Find your game face and use it to endure the inevitable hardships of life, so you don't go down without a fight.

Exercise:

Mental toughness is something I have been working on for years. I worked on it for soccer to start, and now for running, but it has gotten me through my toughest moments outside of sport, too. Here are some ways I developed mental toughness (it won't be easy), which helped me overcome my overthinking. Accomplish all of these.

First, acquire a small calendar.

7 Straight Days of Cold Showers

Every day, you take a cold shower. For the next 7 days, you will have no warm showers at all. Grab your calendar and highlight the next 7 days. With every shower, mark an X in the box for that day.

The 2 Minute Plank

You will plank every day until you can accomplish a 2-minute plank. The harder you push, the faster you will succeed. Do as many planks every day as you'd like; the more the better.

If you are already quite fit and can do a 2-minute plank within 2 days, the new goal is now 4 minutes. If you can get to 4 minutes within the first 2 days, your goal is 7.

Grab your calendar and highlight the next 14 days. Mark down your longest plank time each day.

20 Minute Run

Run every day for 20 minutes, without missing a day. On sore days, you'll still have to walk the 20 minutes. You will start each run with a slow jog. You can take walking breaks when needed and stop after 20 minutes. The challenge is

completed when you can jog (even at a very slow pace) without stopping or walking for the entire 20 minutes.

Every day, after each run, write down how long you went without stopping.

No Electronics for a Month (my favourite)

For the next 30 days: no TV or videos, no movies, no video games, no phone games, and no social media. Delete your apps and unplug your machines. Phone calls are fine, but avoid texting unless necessary. You can do anything else you want, but it cannot be with a screen. Use this time to connect with family and friends (without using electronics), play a board game, work on a hobby, read a book, clean, or whatever else you can think of.

Use your calendar to mark down each successful day that passes with an X. Feel free to write down what you did in each box if you'd like. The challenge starts again if you fail.

Side Note: Not wanting to do one or more of these proves you **NEED** to. It is meant to be hard. To accomplish this, create a plan for each goal if you'd like, no excuses. You can only do one at a time.

Mental Toughness will help you commit when you are afraid. It will help you push through self-doubt and even improve your attitude in the Reflection stage.

LEARN MORE

[Video] Nike: Have a Hard Year - Kobe

[Video] Nike: I Am the Pressure - LeBron

[Article] Medium: The Science of Developing Mental Toughness by James Clear

5. Minimize Distractions

The world is filled with distractions.

Your house is filled with distractions. Your phone is filled with distractions. Your brain is filled with distractions. Everywhere you look, you'll find something fighting for your attention. There is plenty of research suggesting that these distractions are increasing the effects of ADHD, impairing mood, and decreasing focus. To avoid overthinking, we have to take the reins by being more intentional. One way we can do that is through Minimalism.

Minimalism is the elimination of distraction done through making mindful choices. Most believe that minimalism means owning nothing, but that is far from the truth. A minimalist is someone who simplifies their life to feel clean

and focused. They remove unnecessary clutter, cherish what they own, and focus on what is important. They remove distractions.

Did you know that the state of your house and bedroom can reflect your mental health? A cluttered room is a cluttered mind. If we can keep our space clean, we can actually do the same with our minds. One way to ensure consistent cleanliness is to own less. Having less means worrying about less. It also means you will appreciate what you have more.

Exercise:

We will declutter your mind by decluttering your house. If you live in North America, chances are, you own way too many things. We are overly sentimental, and you probably have stuff you haven't thought about in years. The hard truth is, when you are gone, no one will care about any of it. It is just stuff, and at the moment, it is stress stored in the back of your mind.

Possession List

- i. Write a list of everything you own. Dig through boxes and check your closets if required. The longer the list, the more you may benefit from this.

2. Go through the list and write down the last time you saw, used, or even thought about the item
3. Get rid of anything that hasn't been used or seen in the last...
 - a. **Level One:** 2 Years.
 - b. **Level Two:** Year.
 - c. **Level Three:** 6 Months.
 - d. **Level Four:** Last 2 Months.
4. Go through the list and Star items that are important to you and used regularly. This is your appreciation list.
5. Work on this over time to shorten the list and keep your mind free of distraction and clutter.

Remember, millions, probably billions, of people live this way around the world, it isn't unusual or unhealthy to own a little less.

Minimalism will help keep your environment clean, keep your mind organized, and increase your appreciation for your belongings. This, in turn, will help ease overthinking.

LEARN MORE

[Article] Becoming Minimalist: Benefits to Minimalism: 21 Benefits of Owning Less

6. Improve Your Planning

Everything you need to know is in the *Plan Chapter*. You can find some helpful resources here.

LEARN MORE

Logic

[Video] **Crash Course:** How to Argue - Abduction and Induction

[Article] **Philosophy A Level:** Deductive, Inductive, and Abduction Reasoning

Emotional Intelligence

[Video] **Big Think:** 12 Traits Emotionally Intelligent People Share - Daniel Goleman

[Article] **Master Plan:** Training Emotional Intelligence: 10 Tips and Exercises for Daily Work

Creativity

[Video] **Sprouts - Creative Thinking:** How to Connect Increase the Dots to Connect

[Search It Up] Go to the internet and search up solutions to current problems you are going through. Check out different solutions. This may be an article or even someone's story on their experiences on the topic.

Congratulations! You have completed the exercises. By now, I am sure you've noticed that these exercises won't just help you with overthinking, but also numerous other issues we all face on a regular basis. Your critical thinking, emotional maturity, and relationships with others will all improve. This all adds up. Recall what overthinking is about: control. One or all of these skills will help you develop confidence in various areas of your life, resulting in greater control and understanding.

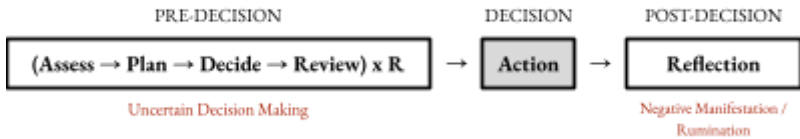
Now, if you haven't completed the exercises and are just reading along, you may want to skip all of these exercises because they seem useless or challenging, but I will give you the hard truth here — Most people don't need to learn; they need to be reminded. You are allowing yourself to be subconsciously led by your brain to find easy solutions, but as my dad likes to say, "life isn't easy."

However, plenty of things are hard whilst still being enjoyable. Don't mope, and have fun with it. What else were you planning to do with your one life anyway?

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

CHEAT SHEET

Now that you have experienced all of the skills, you are better equipped to use the *Decision-Making Process*. This is a guide you can use until you get comfortable enough to do this on your own or even in your head.



R = The number of times the process has been repeated

THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS GUIDE

To be used with the book and its corresponding chapters

ASSESS

1. Identify The Topic

What is the decision I have to make?

2. Identify Possible Outcomes of the Decision

What is your desired outcome(s)?

What is your neutral outcome(s)?

What is your feared outcome(s)?

3. Necessities for Success

What do I need or have to accomplish the best or neutral outcome? (skill, object, money, permissions, people, time, title, attitude, prerequisite, other)

4. Barriers to Success

What could stop me from accomplishing the best or neutral outcome? (skill, object, money, permissions, people, time, title, attitude, prerequisite, other)

5. Available Resources

Can someone with experience help? (friend, family, professional)

How will I ask for help? (through email, text, call, in person)

Can I learn from someone with experience through videos or books? (youtube, documentaries, books, articles, interviews)

Do I have past experiences with something like this? What did I do right and wrong?

PLAN

6. Review Resources

Use all of the resources and take notes. Highlight the most common answers between all resources --- this is most likely objective and less subjective.

7. Build Multiple Plans and Set Goals using the Data

Large Goal --- What is the desired outcome?

Medium Goal --- What must be accomplished to achieve the desired goal?

Small Goal --- What daily/weekly actions can I take to accomplish these medium goals? Barriers --- What will get in my way?

Counter Move for Each Barrier --- What are the different ways that I will counter each barrier?

Trust Period --- How long will you give yourself after making the decision to stop you from quitting.

DECIDE

8. Choose

Make a decision.

REVIEW

9. Re-Read

Read over everything while keeping your goals in mind.

Does it still make sense?

Will your weakness get in the way?

REPEAT

10. Repeat if Necessary

If you are given new and important information, redo the process if needed. If you are just scared, do it scared.

ACTION

11. Action

Follow through with your decision.

REFLECT

12. Barrier Counter Reminder

Remember the Barriers that will arise, be prepared for them, expect them, beat them.

13. The Good

What were the positive outcomes you caused?

What were the positive outcomes that were lucky?

14. The Bad

What were the negative outcomes you caused?

What were the negative outcomes that were unlucky?

15. Hindsight

Go back to the original Pre-Decision and see what you would change with your new information and experience.

Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to read my notes. As mentioned, I am no professional, but I am passionate. I have spent my entire life asking myself, “How can I be better?” and over time, I realized that self-improvement was more than a tool to me; it became a hobby. With this book, I hope to help other strategic thinkers find a tangible way to grasp the reality of overthought. Overthinking, to me, has been a cluttered desk, filled with loose sheets and pencils. While there are resources available for us overthinkers, much of it feels more like talking about the problem rather than giving me the tools required to clean this up myself. In other words, I hope this book illustrates the ways you can organize your thoughts and provides insight into the skills required to then act on them. Personally, everything in this book has opened up a new world of possibilities. Possibilities I would have missed because I spent most of my time thinking instead of doing.

As the cover of the book suggests, life is a grand performance in an overstimulating environment, filled with the pressure of everyone watching, but when you take control, you won't notice all of that; you'll be too busy enjoying the music. Keep your mind open and good luck, my friends.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael S. Evans." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a period at the end.