

## **Five strategies for reducing overthinking**

When you are consumed by overthinking, it can feel difficult or nearly impossible to stop, but various methods are available to help.

Here are five methods that you can consider using to try to stop overthinking:

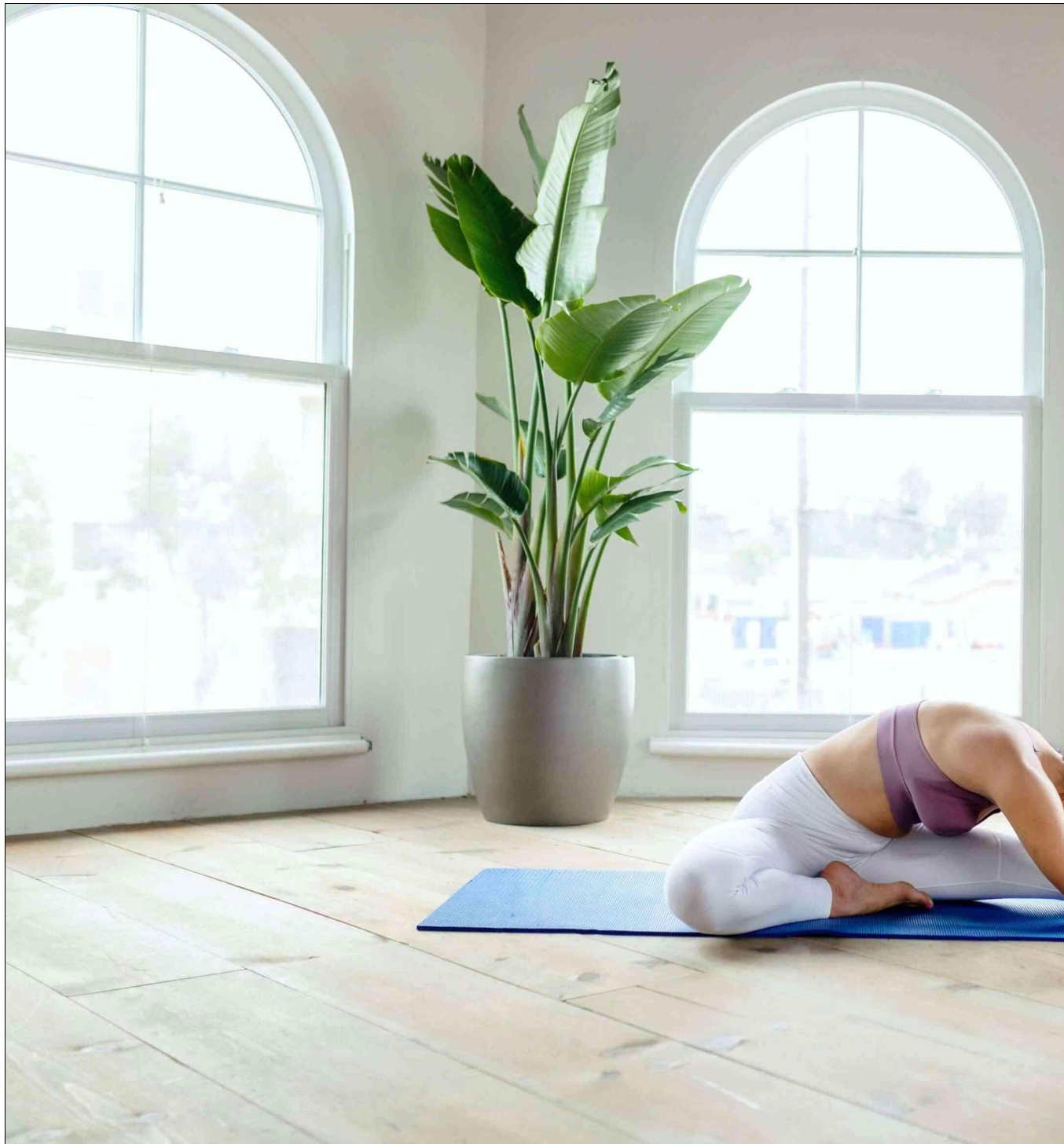
### **1. Meditation**

Meditation is a practice that involves quieting or focusing the mind through a range of techniques. Meditation does not require you to clear your head of all thoughts; rather, it can help you recognize your thoughts without reacting or building upon them.

For instance, one popular type of meditation is mindfulness meditation, which involves being aware of your internal feelings as well as your external senses. Studies have found that [mindfulness meditation](#) can bring benefits for individuals in key areas such as depression, anxiety, and chronic pain.

If you are new to meditation, you may consider starting with guided meditations, which can be helpful and might take away some of the guesswork about how to do it. These audios can guide you through the process and help you build a foundation for you to continue with. Once you become more comfortable with meditating, you may consider practicing in silence or using relaxing instrumentals rather than guided meditations.

It may also help you to designate a specific time for meditation. Whether it is five minutes after waking up or 30 minutes before going to bed, creating a routine may make it easier to quiet your mind and meditate.



Getty

## **2. Finding mindfulness in everyday life**

Meditation is not the only way to practice mindfulness aimed at reducing [overthinking](#). Mindfulness can be cultivated in the most mundane activities, beyond a dedicated meditation time. For instance, when you are doing chores, try to focus on the small actions and the process of washing your dishes or sweeping the floor. When driving or walking around, pay attention to your surroundings and the space around you. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel? How do you feel? Concentrating on these

external factors rather than what is going on in your head can make it easier to quiet your noisy thoughts and find clarity.

In addition to trying to be present in these simple activities, books, and apps are also designed to help you become more mindful. What works well for one person may not work for others, so you may consider experimenting with different approaches and tools to find the best method for you.

### **3. Doing activities you enjoy**

Stress and overthinking can often go hand-in-hand. If we create opportunities for ourselves to reduce stress and enjoy the present moment, then the need or space to ruminate on other things may decrease.

To try to stop overthinking, consider [finding activities](#) you like and carve out time for them daily. For instance, these could include any of the following:

- Singing
- Dancing
- Painting
- Drawing
- Crafting
- Gardening
- Photography
- Cooking
- Writing
- Hiking

While these are some popular examples, these are only a few ideas. As you try to decrease obsessive or negative thoughts, consider granting yourself the time and energy to look for things that interest you, and then try to incorporate more of those into your daily life.



Getty

Overthinking can be difficult to combat

[Get help from a licensed therapist](#)

#### **4. Yoga, tai chi, or other exercise**

Getting physical exercise can be another great strategy, especially for those who find it challenging to get out of their heads. Below are a few exercises you may consider trying.

- [Yoga](#): This form of exercise can be a relaxing method that can help you cultivate mindfulness while it pushes the limits of your flexibility and strength, both inner and

outer. Yoga is available for all ages and skill levels, so do not be intimidated by some of the intense exercises you may encounter on the internet or in your local gym.

- **Tai Chi:** If you feel too restless for meditation but unable to engage in strenuous activity, tai chi might be a good option. **Tai chi** is a martial art that focuses on achieving a state of calm and clarity. It involves focusing on your breath as you practice slow, intentional movements designed to improve your health and longevity.

- **Running, Walking, Or Hiking In Nature:** Running, hiking, and other outdoor exercises can help get you out of your head while also getting you out into nature, which has been shown to have many mental benefits, including reducing rumination. For instance, according to one study, individuals who went on a 90-minute walk in nature reported **lower levels of rumination** than those who walked through an urban environment.

- **Swimming:** Swimming can be a way to relax and cool down, and it can also be an intense exercise depending on your preferences. If you have a pool, consider setting aside some time to use it. In addition to the benefits of physical activity, you will also have a chance to experience and focus on the physical sensations of immersing your body in water.

Whatever exercise you choose can help you get out of your head and back into the body's senses. That said, if you have a medical condition or physical limitation, please consult with your medical provider before engaging in intense physical activities.

## **5. Taking a cold shower**

Not all the methods that can prevent overthinking are exercises for which you need to set additional time aside. Something as simple as taking a cold shower may help as well. Like strenuous exercise, taking a cold shower provides a shock to your system that can take you away from your thoughts and bring you back into your physical body. Consider trying this out the next time you shower and examine the results. Did it help you to get out of your head, even if it was momentarily?

You can produce the same shock in similar situations. Instead of a cold shower, you could throw your blankets off in the morning and welcome them in the cool air, or you could go for a morning walk in a cool environment. Whatever it is that jolts you back into your body, if you find this method helpful, consider incorporating it more regularly.

## **Further help through therapy**

Figuring out how to stop overthinking can be challenging. If you would like additional help as you try to do this, online therapy may help.

If you experience overthinking often, you may find it helpful to be able to reach out for help whenever those bouts of overthinking arise. With **online therapy** through BetterHelp, you'll have many ways to contact your therapist, including in-app messaging, so you can message your therapist at any time, and they'll respond as soon as they are able.

Studies have shown that online therapy can effectively address various concerns, including overthinking and rumination that may be connected to depression. For instance, one such study examined the effectiveness of a guided web-based rumination-focused cognitive behavioral therapy program (i-RFCBT) to prevent depression. It found that the **guided i-RFCBT reduced the risk of depression**, concluding that "guided i-

RFCBT can reduce the onset of depression in high-risk young people reporting high levels of worry/rumination and stress.”