



# MINDFUL INTERRUPT LIST FOR OVERTHINKING



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MINDFUL PATH COUNSELLING

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## Mindful "Interrupt" List: Quick Activities to Break the Overthinking Cycle

Overthinking can be exhausting, and it often feels like a cycle that's hard to escape. This list offers simple, mindful activities that can help you "interrupt" overthinking in the moment. These small actions will help you shift your focus, ground yourself, and reclaim your sense of calm.

### **1. Take 2 Minutes for Deep Breathing**

- **How to do it:** Close your eyes and take a deep breath in through your nose for a count of four. Hold for four counts, then exhale slowly through your mouth for a count of six. Repeat this cycle for two minutes.
- **Why it helps:** Deep breathing activates the body's relaxation response, helping to reduce the stress response and calm the mind.

### **2. Say a Positive Affirmation**

- **How to do it:** Find a comfortable spot, close your eyes, and repeat a positive affirmation aloud. Examples include:
  - "I am safe and in control."
  - "I trust myself to handle this moment."
  - "This feeling will pass, and I can handle it."
- **Why it helps:** Positive affirmations can shift your mindset, helping you replace negative or anxious thoughts with more balanced perspectives.

### **3. Pick Up a Book or Journal**

- **How to do it:** Take a few minutes to read a chapter from a book or write a few lines in your journal. Let yourself get lost in the process without worrying about the outcome.
- **Why it helps:** Shifting your focus to something external like reading or journaling can break the cycle of rumination and give your mind a temporary break.

#### 4. Draw or Doodle

- **How to do it:** Grab a pen and paper and draw anything that comes to mind. It doesn't need to be a masterpiece; simply letting your hand move freely can help to quiet the mind.
- **Why it helps:** Engaging in creative activities, even briefly, taps into the right side of the brain, which can reduce stress and allow for mental clarity.

#### 5. Stretch or Move

- **How to do it:** Stand up and stretch or do a simple movement like a few gentle yoga poses or a walk around the room.
- **Why it helps:** Physical movement helps release tension in the body and clears the mind, helping you to refocus and reset your energy.

#### 6. Focus on a Single Sensory Experience

- **How to do it:** Focus on one of your senses for a minute. For example:
  - Touch something textured and really focus on how it feels.
  - Look out the window and notice all the details around you (colours, shapes, movement).
  - Take a deep breath and focus on how the air smells.
- **Why it helps:** Engaging one sense at a time brings you into the present moment and takes your attention away from anxious thoughts.

#### 7. Listen to Music or Sounds

- **How to do it:** Play a song you enjoy, or listen to sounds of nature, like rain, birds, or ocean waves. Let yourself fully focus on the music or sound.
- **Why it helps:** Music and calming sounds can shift your mood and reframe your emotional state, helping to calm your mind.

## **8. Drink a Glass of Water**

- **How to do it:** Take a moment to drink a glass of water slowly. Notice how the water feels as it cools your throat and hydrates your body.
- **Why it helps:** Hydration can help clear the mental fog and the act of slowing down to drink water can help reset your focus.

### **How to Use This List**

The key to breaking the cycle of overthinking is creating small, mindful pauses throughout your day. Keep this list handy and choose one or more activities whenever you catch yourself overthinking. Try them and notice what works best for you. The more you practice, the easier it becomes to interrupt the cycle.

### **Why It Works**

Interrupting overthinking with simple, mindful actions allows you to regain control and reduce the stress associated with anxious thoughts. Each activity encourages a shift of focus from the mental chatter to something present and grounded in the moment.

### **Can you think of any of your own?**

Everyone's overthinking triggers are different, so it might be helpful to come up with your own mindful "interrupts" that work for you. Perhaps there's a certain activity that helps you shift gears or a quick practice that calms your mind? Take a moment to reflect on what might work best for you, and feel free to add them to your list. The more tools you have at your disposal, the easier it becomes to break the cycle of overthinking.