



How to Stop Overthinking with Mindfulness Journaling

Understanding Overthinking and Its Impact

Overthinking – often referred to in psychology as **rumination** – is the habit of continuously replaying worries or negative thoughts in your mind. It's like a mental hamster wheel: our thoughts spin in circles without reaching a resolution. Research has found that this kind of circular thinking can **harm both mental and physical health** ¹. For example, an April 2020 study showed that persistent rumination heightens vulnerability to **anxiety, depression, insomnia**, and even raises stress-related inflammation in the body ¹. Overthinking not only steals our peace of mind, but it can also disrupt daily life – impairing focus, sleep, and decision-making. As one Harvard psychiatrist put it, *“Rumination is like getting stuck in a conversation with yourself... thinking endlessly about a problem often doesn't solve anything – it just proves exhausting”* ² ¹.

From a spiritual perspective, overthinking can **rob us of joy** and intimacy with God. Jesus warned about letting worries consume us, saying, *“Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”* (Matthew 6:27, NIV). When we overthink, we often dwell on worst-case scenarios or past mistakes. This constant worry runs counter to the Bible's encouragement to *“cast all your anxiety on [God] because he cares for you”* (1 Peter 5:7, NIV). Instead of productively solving problems, overthinking loops our fears, **amplifying anxiety** and self-doubt. In the long run, it can create a feedback loop between anxiety and depression ³ – you feel anxious, then discouraged about feeling that way, which fuels more anxious thoughts. Clearly, breaking the cycle of overthinking is crucial for both **emotional well-being and spiritual growth**.

What Is Mindfulness Journaling?

Mindfulness journaling is a therapeutic practice that combines two powerful tools – mindfulness and journaling – to help break free from overthinking. **Mindfulness** means paying attention to the present moment with openness and without judgment. In practice, it often involves calming your mind (for example, through deep breathing or prayerful meditation) and gently observing your thoughts and feelings as they come and go. Rather than getting swept up in worries about the future or regrets about the past, mindfulness keeps you anchored “right here, right now.” Jesus modeled a form of mindful presence when He said, *“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own”* (Matthew 6:34, NIV). This verse reminds us to live in today's grace instead of anxiously projecting into the future.

Journaling, on the other hand, is the simple act of writing down your thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Many people find that putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) helps organize chaotic thoughts and release inner tensions. In fact, **mental health professionals often recommend journaling** as part of therapy for anxiety and stress ⁴. Writing out what's on your mind creates a “safe space” to express emotions that might be hard to speak aloud. It's a way to, as the psalmist David did, *“pour out your heart like water in the Lord's presence”* (cf. Lamentations 2:19, a practice echoed throughout the Psalms). King David's



psalms are essentially journaled prayers — he frequently **vented his fears and sorrows to God on paper**, which helped him process those feelings and ultimately renew his trust in the Lord (see Psalm 13 for example).

Mindfulness journaling combines these two practices. It means approaching your journaling time in a mindful, intentional way. Instead of just scribbling furiously in the grip of panic, you slow down and write **thoughtfully and observantly**. You might begin with a short prayer or a minute of calm breathing, inviting God's presence into your process (Psalm 46:10 says, *"Be still, and know that I am God"*, NIV). Then, as you write, you do so with gentle awareness: noticing your thoughts and feelings, but not *judging* them. For instance, if you're anxious about an upcoming job review, you might write down the stream of worries running through your mind. Mindfulness means you acknowledge those anxious thoughts ("I'm afraid of failing; I'm worried what my boss will say") **without immediately spiraling into panic or criticism** of yourself for having them. You simply observe: *"I see that I'm feeling nervous and thinking worst-case scenarios."* This act of observing begins to distance you from the relentless emotional grip of the thoughts.

Importantly, mindfulness journaling isn't just **wallowing in worries on paper**. It also involves redirecting your focus toward truth and gratitude. After you've identified anxious thoughts, you can mindfully respond to them. This is where Christian mindfulness adds a unique dimension: we don't merely "notice" our thoughts; we can also **bring them captive to Christ**. The Apostle Paul writes, *"...we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV). In practice, after writing a worry, you might write a countering truth from Scripture or a prayer of surrender. For example: *"I'm worried I'll fail at my job, but I know God's plans for me are for good (Jeremiah 29:11), so I will do my best and trust Him with the outcome."* In this way, the journal becomes a tool both for **awareness and for replacing lies with God's truth**.

Biblical Perspectives on Calming a Restless Mind

Far from being a mere self-help trend, the core principles of mindfulness journaling resonate with biblical wisdom. **Scripture acknowledges the problem of an anxious, racing mind** and offers guidance to find peace. A hallmark verse is *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God"* (Philippians 4:6, NIV). Here we see a divine antidote to overthinking: rather than letting anxiety churn internally, God invites us to **turn our worries into prayers**. Writing those prayers in a journal can be an effective way to *"present your requests to God"* in a tangible form. Many believers keep **"prayer journals,"** which are essentially mindfulness journals focused on conversation with God. They write out prayers, fears, and hopes, and later record how God answered. This practice not only offloads anxieties onto God (echoing 1 Peter 5:7) but also builds faith over time as you see God's faithfulness in past entries.

The Bible also encourages a form of **self-reflection and examination** that aligns with mindful journaling. Paul advises, *"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves"* (2 Corinthians 13:5, NIV). Likewise, 1 Timothy 4:16 says, *"Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching"* (NIV). In other words, we are called to **pay attention to the state of our heart and mind**, measuring our thoughts and attitudes against God's truth. Mindfulness journaling provides a structured way to do exactly that. As one Christian writer observed, *"Mindfulness journaling compels us to examine and act on what we read [in Scripture], or what God impressed upon our hearts"*, rather than rushing through life unreflectively ⁵. Taking time to write about our day, our motives, and our struggles before God is akin to the psalmist's prayer, *"Search me, God, and know my heart... test me and know my anxious thoughts"* (Psalm 139:23, NIV). It invites the Holy Spirit to shine light on any anxious or offensive ways in us and lead us back to His peace.

The information presented is for educational and inspirational purposes only, it is not intended as medical advice.



Another biblical concept related to overthinking is **renewing the mind**. Romans 12:2 urges, *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”* (NIV). Overthinkers often fall into mental patterns that mirror the world’s anxieties – obsessing over success, others’ opinions, or worst-case scenarios. But God wants to transform those thought patterns. Journaling with mindfulness can facilitate this “renewing” process. How? By helping us identify unhealthy thought patterns and then deliberately **shifting focus to God’s perspective**. For instance, an overthinker might frequently write in their journal, *“I feel like I’m not good enough.”* Noticing this recurring negative thought is the first step. The next could be renewing the mind by writing a truth to counter it: *“God says I am His workmanship (Ephesians 2:10); I am enough in Christ.”* Over time, writing and meditating on such truths helps internalize them, **gradually replacing the lies** that fueled our anxiety. In fact, this technique is very similar to what cognitive-behavioral therapists do: identify distorted thoughts and replace them with truth. It’s wonderful to see modern psychology catching up with principles Scripture taught long ago!

Finally, **trust** is a crucial biblical principle to combat overthinking. Jesus gently chided Martha for her anxious overthinking, saying, *“Martha, Martha... you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one”* (Luke 10:41-42, NIV). Martha’s mind was scattered and stressed, whereas her sister Mary chose to quietly sit at Jesus’ feet, listening to Him. The “one thing needed” was to trust and focus on the Lord. Mindfulness journaling can help a worried soul move from a “Martha mindset” to a “Mary mindset.” By intentionally slowing down, sitting in God’s presence, and writing what’s on our heart, we mimic Mary’s posture of **calm attentiveness to Jesus**. As we do so, we can surrender each concern to Him in writing. This echoes the promise of Isaiah 26:3: *“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You”* (NIV). Writing our worries into prayers is an act of steadfast trust — transferring the burden from our mind to God’s hands. It’s amazing how, after writing out a fear and praying through it, we often feel lighter. The problem may not be solved yet, but we experience the *“peace of God, which transcends all understanding”* guarding our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:7, NIV). That peace is the gift God wants to give when we stop the cycle of overthinking and instead bring our minds back to Him.

How Mindfulness Journaling Helps – Backed by Science and Faith

Combining mindfulness with journaling isn’t just a nice idea – **research shows it can measurably improve mental health**. When we journal mindfully, we engage both psychological and physiological mechanisms that reduce anxiety. Let’s unpack some of the benefits that studies (and personal testimonies) have found:

- **Breaking the Cycle of Rumination:** Writing down your thoughts provides a form of *release*. One Christian counselor noted, *“Personally, I find journaling perfect for processing my racing thoughts. Somehow, seeing them on paper, they seem less threatening”* ⁶. This mirrors what many therapists observe: when a worry is trapped in your head, it can morph into an overwhelming monster, but writing it out externalizes the worry. It’s like talking to a trusted friend – except the “friend” is your journal. The problem becomes a bit more objective and solvable once it’s on the page. In fact, **cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)** often uses a tool called a “thought record,” which is essentially a journaling exercise: the person writes down an anxious thought and then writes evidence for and against it, to challenge cognitive distortions. This technique helps stop the rumination loop by injecting reality and perspective. **Scripture encourages this kind of reflective challenge** when it says *“we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:5). Mindfulness journaling helps us actually perform that “thought capture,” slowing down the runaway thought train and examining each car (thought) under the light of truth.



- Physiological Calming of the Brain:** Remarkably, **neuroscience has confirmed** what many have sensed – that putting feelings into words can calm the brain's fear center. Brain imaging studies at UCLA found that when people wrote about their emotional experiences, activity in the **amygdala** (the brain's alarm center for fear and stress) decreased, while activity in the **prefrontal cortex** (the area for rational thinking and self-control) increased ⁷. In simpler terms, **writing your emotions down literally helps your "thinking brain" regain control over your "emotional brain."** The act of labeling a feeling ("I feel inadequate" or "I'm scared about X") engages neural pathways that soothe the fight-or-flight response. King David intuitively did this in the Psalms – he would name his emotions and fears in God's presence – and as a result often found his anxiety give way to trust by the end of the psalm. Modern research affirms David's approach: one 2007 study showed that "*affect labeling*" (naming your feelings) reduced amygdala reactivity to upsetting stimuli ⁸. So when you journal mindfully, you are not "wallowing"; you are performing a proven therapeutic technique that **diminishes the intensity of negative emotions**. No wonder people often report feeling calmer after journaling! It's a biological response designed by God – when we bring our fears into the light (through words, prayer, or counsel), their grip on us loosens.
- Reduces Anxiety and Depression Symptoms:** A growing body of research indicates that regular journaling can produce measurable improvements in mood. For example, a *randomized controlled trial* published in 2018 examined the effects of "**positive affect journaling**" (a form of journaling focusing on positive experiences and emotions) in adults with elevated anxiety. After 12 weeks of journaling three times per week, the group who journaled showed **significant decreases in anxiety and depressive symptoms** compared to a control group that received usual care ⁹. Notably, benefits were already evident after the *first month* – those who journaled had less anxiety and greater resilience than those who did not ⁹. This suggests that even a few weeks of consistent journaling can start to break the habit of overthinking and boost your mental well-being. Another analysis of multiple studies found that journaling interventions led to an average **5% reduction in overall mental distress**, with **anxiety levels dropping by about 9%** in those who journaled versus those who didn't ¹⁰. In clinical terms, that's a meaningful improvement – especially considering journaling is a low-cost, accessible tool anyone can use. It's encouraging to see secular research validating what Scripture has long taught: "*Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up*" (Proverbs 12:25, NIV). Writing kind or truthful words to yourself in a journal is like administering a biblical "good word" to an anxious heart.
- Improves Resilience and Emotional Regulation:** Journaling doesn't only provide immediate relief – it can also build your long-term resilience. By habitually processing stressful events on paper, you train your brain to recover and find perspective more quickly. One study noted that journaling was associated with **greater emotional resilience** over time ¹¹. Part of this is because journaling serves as practice in emotional regulation. Instead of impulsively reacting to worries (for instance, immediately panicking or snapping at someone when stressed), you cultivate the habit of pausing and reflecting. A Christian therapist describes it this way: "*Writing gives the emotional brain a way to slow down, step back, and let the thinking brain take the lead... Instead of getting hijacked by feelings, journaling lets you step outside of them, name them, and in doing so, change how they affect you.*" ⁷. Over time, this practice can rewire neural pathways – strengthening your ability to manage emotions. This aligns with biblical wisdom that "*a person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls*" (Proverbs 25:28). Journaling helps fortify those walls of self-control around your mind and heart, so that fear and anger don't breach them as easily. In addition, research by Dr. James Pennebaker on **expressive writing** found that people who wrote about their traumatic or stressful



experiences not only felt better mentally, but even showed **improved immune function and faster wound healing** compared to those who didn't write ¹². It's as if processing emotions clears out internal stress that would otherwise wear down the body. Truly, *"a cheerful heart is good medicine"* (Proverbs 17:22), and journaling can help cultivate that healthier heart and mind.

- **Shifts Focus to the Positive (Gratitude and Reframing):** Mindfulness journaling often incorporates exercises in **gratitude and reframing**, which are powerful antidotes to overthinking. Overthinkers tend to fixate on what's wrong – our brains naturally have a negativity bias, scanning for threats or mistakes. Journaling gives us a chance to intentionally redirect that focus. For instance, many people use a **gratitude journal**: at the end of each day, they write down 3-5 things they're thankful for, however small. This simple practice has been shown to lift mood and reduce stress. Neuroscientists at UC Berkeley found that *"people who practice gratitude journaling show increased levels of dopamine and serotonin"* – the brain's "feel-good" neurotransmitters ¹³. In other words, **gratitude literally changes your brain chemistry**, making you more content. In a Christian context, gratitude journaling is just obeying the biblical command: *"give thanks in all circumstances"* (1 Thessalonians 5:18). It shifts our attention from problems to God's blessings. Mindful journaling also encourages **cognitive reframing** – looking at situations from a different, more constructive angle. Let's say your overthinking revolves around personal failures. In a mindful journal, you might recount a disappointing event, but then also write about *what you learned* from it or how God might redeem it. One mindfulness prompt asks, *"What is one past event perceived as a failure, that now is perceived as a gift?"* ¹⁴. Questions like that gently train us to see God's redemptive work and not just the pain. The Bible affirms that God can bring good from our trials (Romans 8:28), so reframing our narrative in light of that hope is both a psychological and spiritual boost. In summary, journaling steers us away from the tunnel vision of worry and opens our eyes to a **bigger picture of grace**.
- **Enhances Spiritual Awareness:** For Christians, one of the greatest benefits of mindfulness journaling is how it can heighten our awareness of God's presence and guidance. Instead of hurried, perfunctory devotions, adding journaling forces us to **slow down and truly listen**. As one believer testified, integrating mindfulness prompts into her daily quiet time caused her *"awareness in Bible reading, prayer and God's presence [to increase]"*, helping her not to gloss over verses but to really absorb and apply them ¹⁵ ¹⁶. In your journal, you might record a Scripture that stood out to you and explore why it's relevant. Or you might notice a nudge from the Holy Spirit – perhaps a conviction or an encouragement – and write it down so you can respond. In doing so, you fulfill James 1:22, which urges us not just to hear the word and forget it, but to **act on it**. Mindfulness journaling facilitates obedience: it *"compels us to examine and act on what we read, or what God impressed upon our hearts,"* rather than letting those impressions slip away in the noise of the day ⁵. This practice can lead to personal revival, as we become doers of the Word. It's like **holding up a mirror to our soul** (cf. James 1:23-25) – the journal reflects our true thoughts and spiritual state, and we can adjust course towards Christ. Many Christians find that journaling their journey with God over time results in a rich record of His faithfulness. In dark moments, reading past entries of answered prayers or lessons learned can remind you that God has guided you through overthinking before, and He will do it again. It builds an *Ebenezer* (1 Samuel 7:12) – a testimony in writing of how far the Lord has helped you.



Steps to Start Mindfulness Journaling to Stop Overthinking

By now, we've seen how mindfulness journaling aligns with both **biblical counsel and scientific research** as a tool to overcome overthinking. But how can you put this into practice in your daily life? Here is a step-by-step guide to get started, along with some tips and best practices:

1. Set Aside a Regular Time and Place: Consistency helps make journaling most effective. Choose a time of day when you can have *15-30 minutes of quiet* to reflect. Many Christians prefer journaling in the morning to center their minds before the day's worries hit, or at night to process the day's events and set aside concerns before sleep. Find a spot where you feel comfortable and won't be easily interrupted – perhaps a cozy chair with your coffee in the morning, or a desk by lamplight in the evening. Make it a *sacred meeting time with God*. Jesus often withdrew to solitary places to pray (Luke 5:16); by scheduling your mindfulness journaling, you are following His example of intentionally stepping away from busyness to reconnect with God and your own soul.

2. Start with Mindful Prayer or Breathing: Before you begin writing, take a minute or two to **calm your body and mind**. If you're feeling anxious or your thoughts are racing, practice a brief breathing exercise: inhale slowly for a count of 4, hold for 4, exhale for 6–8 counts, focusing on the sensation of the breath. As you do this, **invite God's presence**. You might pray something simple like, "Lord, help me to be still and know that You are God (Psalm 46:10). I welcome Your Holy Spirit here as I reflect." Some people like to meditate on a short Scripture (for example, repeating "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing" – Psalm 23:1) while breathing. The goal is to shift out of frantic mode into a receptive, **quieted state**. Research shows that even basic mindfulness meditation techniques like deep breathing can clear the mind and reduce rumination ¹⁷. In fact, **relaxation techniques are proven to derail overthinking** by physiologically reducing stress hormones and slowing heart rate ¹⁷. This opening phase sets the tone: you are telling your nervous system that it's safe to let go of fight-or-flight mode, and telling your soul to **focus on God's presence here and now**.

3. Write Out Your Thoughts and Feelings Freely: Now begin journaling whatever is on your mind, *especially* the worries, stresses, or looping thoughts that you want to confront. Don't worry about form or grammar – this journal is for your eyes (and God's) only. The key is to **be honest and unfiltered**. If you feel upset – say, you're angry at your boss, or you're afraid you'll never get married, or you're doubting God in a trial – write it down candidly. The Psalms demonstrate that God can handle our raw emotions; David wrote things like, "*How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?*" (Psalm 13:1) in his journal of prayer. So pour it out. Sometimes it helps to write in **question form** to God (e.g. "God, why am I feeling so anxious about this meeting? What am I really afraid of?"). Other times, you might just narrate the situation that's replaying in your head, almost as if writing a letter to a mentor. **The point is to get the ruminating thoughts out of your head and onto the page**. As noted earlier, this act alone immediately lessens their power and gives you distance. You may find that once a worry is written, your mind doesn't feel the need to obsessively keep repeating it. Give yourself at least 5-10 minutes to write freely. If you hit a wall thinking "I don't know what to say," you can use prompts to spur insight. For example, ask yourself: "*What's really bothering me right now?*", "*What's the worst that could happen, and how likely is it?*", or "*What does this situation remind me of?*". These questions encourage deeper reflection rather than surface-level venting. Remember to be **compassionate with yourself** in this process – mindfulness means no judgment. If you notice you're writing "I'm so stupid for feeling this way," pause and reframe it: maybe "I notice I am feeling ashamed." Treat your feelings gently, as you believe God would: "*The Lord is gracious and compassionate*" (Psalm 145:8), and you can show yourself some of that grace too.

The information presented is for educational and inspirational purposes only, it is not intended as medical advice.



4. Bring Scripture and Truth into the Conversation: After unloading your mind, **don't stop there**. One of the advantages of Christian mindfulness journaling is that you have an objective source of truth to refer to: God's Word. Now is the time to respond to what you wrote with insights from Scripture or prayer. Scan what you've written – are there lies or distortions apparent? Common distortions in overthinking include *catastrophic thinking* ("Everything will go wrong"), *black-and-white thinking* ("If I fail at this, I'm a complete failure"), *mind-reading* ("My friend probably hates me because she didn't text back"), and so on. Take each worrisome thought captive and examine it. Ask: *"Is this true? What does God say about this?"* For example, if your journal entry reveals a fear like "I feel alone in this struggle," you can counter it by recalling Hebrews 13:5, where God says *"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."* Write that promise in your journal, perhaps as a direct answer from God: *"Lord, You are with me even now, I am not alone."* By writing these responses, you are **actively re-patterning your thought life** according to truth (Romans 12:2). Sometimes, you might look up specific Bible verses that address your situation – doing so makes your journaling a mini Bible study targeting your worry. For instance, if you wrote a lot about financial worries, you could look up Matthew 6:25-34 and note Jesus' promises to provide for the birds of the air and how you're more valuable than them. Incorporate those assurances into your journal entry (e.g. *"Jesus, You said not to worry about what I'll eat or wear...help me trust You will provide today's bread."*). This step is critical because it transforms journaling from mere venting (which has some benefit) into a **renewing of the mind exercise** grounded in faith. You move from problem to solution, from anxiety to God's answer. Christian psychologists sometimes call this "truth journaling" – essentially replacing anxious thoughts with scriptural truth on paper. It's analogous to the CBT technique of cognitive restructuring, but powered by divine wisdom. The more you do this, the more your default thinking will start to shift toward a biblical outlook. You'll find that **over time, your mind rehearses truth instead of worst-case scenarios**, even outside of journaling times.

5. End with Gratitude and Surrender: As you finish your journaling session, try to **close on a note of thanksgiving or release**. Thank God for listening and caring about every detail you wrote (1 Peter 5:7 assures He cares for you). You could jot down a short list of *3 things you're grateful for today*. They might be related to your earlier entry or completely separate ("Thank You for the sunshine during my commute, the kind message from a friend, and the meal I had tonight"). This shifts your heart into a posture of praise, which Scripture often pairs with prayer as an antidote to anxiety (*"by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God"* – Philippians 4:6, emphasis added). Gratitude has a proven anxiety-reducing effect, as noted earlier – it releases feel-good neurochemicals and broadens your perspective ¹³. After giving thanks, **surrender your worries to God**. You can physically write a declaration of trust or a prayer of relinquishment. For example: *"Lord, I entrust these matters into Your hands. I've done what I can for today; the rest I leave with You. Your will be done. Give me peace as I sleep, knowing You're in control."* This kind of statement solidifies the act of letting go. It's akin to how the psalmists often conclude on trust ("But I trust in your unfailing love..." – Psalm 13:5). If certain intrusive thoughts still feel unresolved, you can draw a symbolic **"God box"** in your journal – literally a little box on the page – and write those persistent worries inside it, signifying that *these now belong to God for the night*. Some people even close the journal and put it under their Bible as a sign that they are "under God's promises" now, not under the weight of their thoughts. Develop a simple closing ritual that marks an end to that session of reflection. This helps your mind know it can **stop spinning on those issues** for now. Overthinkers often struggle with knowing when to stop analyzing – a closing prayer or written statement of surrender serves as a gentle but firm boundary: *"Enough for now; I've given it to God."*

6. Reflect and Review (Periodically): Every week or two, go back through your recent journal entries and notice patterns or progress. You might be surprised to see that something you agonized over two weeks ago has since been resolved, or never came to pass. That realization itself teaches your brain that many of



the things we overthink don't materialize or God works them out. If you see a repeated worry (say, social anxiety in various situations), that's an area to dig deeper – maybe in prayer, further journaling, or counseling – to uproot the underlying cause. Also, celebrate growth: perhaps you handled a conflict better this week than last month, and your journal captures that improvement. This kind of review turns your journal into a **roadmap of healing**, reinforcing lessons learned. It's similar to how God often instructed Israel to remember and rehearse what He had done for them (Deuteronomy 8:2). In your journal you have a chronicle of moving from turmoil to trust in numerous instances. Let that encourage you that you *can* break free from chronic overthinking. If God gave peace in that situation, He can do it again in this new one. As Lamentations 3:21 says, *"Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope."* Reading past entries where you found peace can rekindle hope in current struggles.

7. Use Creative and Personalized Techniques: Finally, feel free to **adapt your mindfulness journaling practice to what works best for you**. There is no single correct format. Some additional ideas you might incorporate:

- *Write a Letter from God's Perspective:* When you're very distressed, try writing an encouraging note to yourself **as if God were writing to you** (drawing from His scriptural promises). For instance, "My Child, I see you worrying about your future. Remember, I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I am with you always. – Love, Your Heavenly Father." This can be profoundly comforting and helps internalize God's voice of truth over the enemy's voice of fear.
- *Prayer Journaling:* Devote some entries entirely to prayers. You can even write them as poems or psalms. The focus here is communicating with God rather than analyzing circumstances. Many find a deep release in "casting cares" onto paper in the form of written prayer. It's an act of faith to write "Dear Lord, I give You this problem..." and then not take it back.
- *Gratitude Lists and Answered Prayers:* Maintain running lists – one for daily gratitudes (to keep your mind on blessings), and one for answered prayers or positive outcomes. Whenever you catch yourself overthinking "nothing ever goes right," open that list of past faithfulness to remind you that plenty has gone right, by God's grace.
- *Scripture Meditation Entries:* Now and then, choose a single verse that addresses your key anxiety (such as Matthew 6:34 on not worrying about tomorrow, or Philippians 4:6 on being anxious for nothing). Copy it at the top of a journal page. Then spend your session just meditating on that verse: write what it means, personalize it ("God is telling *me*...not to worry about tomorrow because He's already there..."), and let it speak to your current situation. You could even do artistic lettering or illustration of the verse if you enjoy creativity – engaging the artistic side of your brain can further calm the mind and help truth sink in. This approach merges Scripture meditation with journaling, packing a one-two punch against anxious thoughts.
- *The "Thought Challenge" Table:* If you are analytically inclined, you might draw two columns in your journal. In the left column, list your worrisome thought (e.g. "I'm convinced I'll embarrass myself in that presentation."). In the right column, write a challenge to that thought using **evidence or truth** ("I've presented before and it went fine; even if I stumble, most people are kind and forget about it; God will help me as He has in the past."). This is a classic CBT journaling exercise endorsed by many counselors ¹⁰, and it's very effective at **defusing catastrophic thinking**. By the end, you often realize the situation isn't as dire as your anxiety made it seem. And where evidence falls short, God's promises fill in – *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Corinthians 12:9). So even if the "worst" happened, you would survive and grow. Seeing that in writing is reassuring.



Remember, the goal of mindfulness journaling is **progress, not perfection**. Some days your mind will still wander or obsess, and that's okay. Don't get discouraged if you still feel anxious after journaling initially – like exercise, the benefits accumulate over time. The fact that you are confronting the overthinking habit head-on is a huge step in the right direction. In time, you will likely notice that worries release more easily, and that you bounce back from stress faster than before.

A Holistic Approach: Faith, Mindfulness, and Modern Medicine

Mindfulness journaling can be a life-changing habit to stop overthinking, but it works best as part of a **holistic approach** to mental, spiritual, and physical health. As believers, we know that we are whole persons – body, soul, and spirit – and addressing chronic anxiety or overthinking may require care in all these dimensions. Here are a few additional considerations to keep in mind:

- **Lifestyle Matters:** Our daily habits can significantly impact anxiety levels. For instance, **regular physical exercise is a proven anxiety-reducer**. Aerobic activities like brisk walking, jogging, or biking trigger the release of anti-anxiety neurochemicals (such as endorphins and GABA) and activate brain regions that control the amygdala ¹⁸. One Harvard Medical School psychiatrist noted that *“a simple bike ride, dance class, or even a brisk walk can be a powerful tool for those suffering from chronic anxiety”* ¹⁹. Exercise literally helps *“burn off”* nervous energy and diverts your attention away from worries ²⁰. As a Christian, you might combine exercise with worship (e.g. taking a nature walk while praying or listening to worship music), thereby calming your body and nourishing your spirit simultaneously. Additionally, **adequate sleep and a healthy diet** are foundational. Lack of sleep can intensify overthinking (when you're tired, your brain's emotional centers become more reactive), so prioritize 7-8 hours of rest, trusting God as you lie down: *“In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety”* (Psalm 4:8, NIV). Watch stimulants like caffeine; that extra cup of coffee may be fueling your jitters. Instead, ensure you're getting real nourishment – deficiencies in certain nutrients (like B-vitamins or magnesium) can worsen anxiety ²¹ ²². Caring for your body through exercise, sleep, and diet is not unspiritual – it's part of stewarding the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) and can greatly aid in quelling an overactive mind.
- **Community and Support:** Overthinking often thrives in isolation. When we keep our worries to ourselves, they echo louder in our heads. **Talking to a trusted friend, mentor, or pastor** about your anxieties can bring immense relief. Sometimes simply voicing your fears to a compassionate listener causes that “mental cloud” to dissipate. They might offer reassurance, perspective, or prayer support that lightens your burden. The Bible urges us to *“bear one another's burdens”* (Galatians 6:2), which implies we need to share those burdens first. Consider finding an accountability partner for your thought life – someone who will gently check in, pray for you, or even practice mindfulness journaling with you as a partner exercise. For example, two friends might meet weekly to discuss what they journaled and encourage each other. **Corporate spiritual practices** can also help: attending a small group Bible study, joining a prayer meeting, or simply worshipping in church community can pull you out of the introspective trap of overthinking and remind you that you're part of a bigger story and a supportive family in Christ.
- **Professional Help and Modern Medicine:** If overthinking has escalated into an anxiety disorder (such as generalized anxiety, panic disorder, or OCD), please know that **seeking professional help is a wise and godly step**. Chronic anxiety can have biological components – imbalances in brain chemistry or the nervous system – that sometimes require medical intervention or structured

The information presented is for educational and inspirational purposes only, it is not intended as medical advice.



therapy to manage. This does *not* mean you lack faith or have failed spiritually. Unfortunately, a stigma persists in some Christian circles that anxious people should “just pray more” and not need therapy or medication ²³ ²⁴ . But this view is not supported by the Bible. As Focus on the Family notes, telling someone with an anxiety disorder to “*just trust God more*” is akin to telling someone with a broken leg to just have more faith – it’s an **overspiritualization of a condition that may have medical roots** ²⁴ . God often works through **health professionals and medicine** as instruments of His healing. Luke, the author of one Gospel and Acts, was a physician by trade (Colossians 4:14). The Good Samaritan in Jesus’ parable used oil and wine – the medicines of the day – to treat a wounded man (Luke 10:34). These examples show that using practical means to address suffering is commendable, not contradictory to trusting God.

If your overthinking is debilitating – for instance, if you experience constant panic, inability to function in daily tasks, severe insomnia, or obsessive thoughts you cannot interrupt – consider consulting a **Christian counselor or a mental health professional**. Therapies like **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** are highly effective at treating anxiety and teaching skills to manage racing thoughts ²⁵ . A therapist can guide you through techniques similar to journaling (like identifying triggers and restructuring thoughts) and provide accountability and expert insight. Sometimes **medication** is also appropriate. Anti-anxiety or antidepressant medications, prescribed by a physician or psychiatrist, can correct underlying biochemical issues that fuel relentless anxiety. These medications don’t “cure” anxiety overnight, but they can take the edge off extreme symptoms enough that you can then productively apply spiritual disciplines and therapy ²⁶ . For example, an SSRI antidepressant might calm your brain’s reactivity so that you’re actually able to sit and journal without feeling overwhelmed. Taking such medication is not a sign of weak faith. As one pastor plainly put it, “*We wouldn’t dismiss a diabetic who takes insulin as lacking trust in God. In the same way, we shouldn’t view those who take medication for anxiety as deficient in faith*” ²⁷ . The **proper use of medication can be a gift from God’s grace** ²⁸ – it’s one of the “every good and perfect gifts” that comes from the Father of Lights (James 1:17), who has allowed medical knowledge to advance. If you do go on medication, continue in prayer and journaling as well (most research shows a combination of medication plus therapy or spiritual practice is more effective than either alone ²⁹). And always consult your doctor before stopping or changing any medication, as abrupt changes can be harmful ³⁰ .

The bottom line is that **there is no shame in getting help**. God can heal through a miracle, through the support of His people, through wise counseling, or through medicine – often a blend of these. If you had a serious heart condition, you’d pray *and* take the doctor’s treatment. Similarly, with serious anxiety or mental health struggles, you can pray *and* take the steps to seek clinical help. In doing so, you are stewarding your mental health so that you can better love God and others (Matthew 22:37-39). Many Christians, including pastors, have testified that therapy and/or medication were critical in their journey out of debilitating anxiety ³¹ . These tools can enable you to finally apply the spiritual practices (like mindfulness journaling, prayer, Bible study) that anxiety had made too difficult before. If overthinking has you feeling trapped, **reach out** – to a counselor, a doctor, or organizations like the Anxiety and Depression Association or Focus on the Family’s counseling hotline. Help is available, and it is not a betrayal of God’s power – it can very much be His provision for you.

- **Spiritual Warfare Perspective:** It’s worth mentioning that sometimes persistent, irrational overthinking can have a spiritual warfare dimension. The enemy, Satan, is called “the father of lies” (John 8:44) and loves to whisper false, condemning, or fearful thoughts to God’s children to derail our peace. If you suspect some of your tormenting thoughts have a demonic origin (for example, repetitive blasphemous thoughts, or an accuser voice that is distinctly opposed to God’s



truth), approach it with prayer and possibly the counsel of a pastor. **Mindfulness journaling can help here too:** writing down the ugly or intrusive thoughts can expose how *out of line* they are with Scripture, which clues you in that these are not from God. You can then pray specifically against those lies, using the “sword of the Spirit” which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). For instance, if a persistent thought is “God has abandoned you,” you can counter with *“It is written: Never will I leave you”* (Hebrews 13:5) and even record this spiritual battle in your journal. Some believers keep what’s called a **“truth journal”** where on one side they list the enemy’s lie they’ve been hearing, and on the other side God’s truth to refute it, drawn from Scripture. This is essentially *spiritual warfare on paper*. It arms you with specific verses to recall when those lies attack your mind again. Additionally, saturating your environment with worship music and Scripture (perhaps writing verses on note cards, etc.) can create an atmosphere where it’s harder for those oppressive thoughts to persist. And as always, lean on **prayer** – ask mature Christians to pray with you if the battle is intense. Jesus has given us authority to renounce evil; sometimes simply saying, “In Jesus’ name, I reject that lie and cast that thought out,” and then switching to a wholesome focus (Philippians 4:8) can bring relief. While not every case of overthinking is spiritual attack (most have psychological roots as we discussed), being aware of this aspect ensures you address the issue **in a fully rounded way**, covering the physical, mental, and spiritual bases.

Conclusion: Renewing Your Mind Through Christ

Overcoming overthinking is not an overnight transformation, but **step by step, thought by thought, God can lead you into freedom and peace**. Mindfulness journaling is a practical tool that aligns with the biblical call to *“be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (Romans 12:2). By routinely quieting yourself, examining your thoughts, and then soaking those thoughts in God’s truth, you are cooperating with the Holy Spirit’s work of renewal. You’re learning to **“let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”*** (Philippians 2:5, NKJV) – a mind at rest in the Father’s love, not harried by worldly anxieties.

Imagine waking up in the morning and, instead of immediately replaying worries, you take out your journal and start with a short prayer and a gratitude entry. Or when you feel your brain revving up with *“what ifs”* at 2 AM, you turn on the bedside lamp and spend 15 minutes writing a psalm-like prayer, ending with, *“I will lie down and sleep in peace, for You, Lord, make me dwell in safety.”* Little by little, these holy habits will retrain your nervous system. As research has shown, **an anxious brain can learn to be calm** – it can literally change structurally and functionally with practices like journaling, prayer, and meditation ⁷ ¹³. And as Scripture has shown, **God’s peace is available** to guard our hearts and minds when we present our worries to Him (Philippians 4:6-7).

It’s a beautiful convergence of science and faith: the God who designed our brains knew that reflection, confession, thanksgiving – all components of mindfulness journaling – would promote mental health. He invites us into these rhythms not only to honor Him but also to *heal us*. Jesus said, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28, NIV). Overthinking is certainly a heavy burden, but you don’t have to carry it alone or at all. Through a practice like mindfulness journaling, you **bring your burden to Jesus**, bit by bit, and exchange it for His rest.

Be patient with yourself on this journey. There may be setbacks – days when the spiral of thoughts wins. But don’t give up. Every time you choose to pause and write rather than endlessly stew, you’re forging a new path – a path of peace. Celebrate those little victories. **God is for you in this process**. He desires you to have *“the mind of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 2:16) and a mind **“governed by the Spirit [which] is life and**



peace”* (Romans 8:6, NIV). Through Scripture-fed mindfulness and honest journaling, your overthinking mind can indeed become a quieter, more trusting place. Countless believers have found newfound joy and stability by implementing these practices, and you can too.

In closing, remember the promise of **Isaiah 26:3**: *“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You.”* As you practice mindfulness journaling, you are training your mind to be steadfast – to stay present with God, to observe and not be ruled by fluctuating feelings, and to continually realign with His truth. This steady, trusting mind is not achieved by willpower alone; it’s **God’s gift of grace** as we abide in Him daily. So start writing, stay present, and let God’s peace – that **perfect peace** – gently replace every anxious thought. With time, you’ll find that overthinking loses its grip, and a Christ-centered thought life takes root, yielding the *“joy and deep relationship with Jesus”* that your heart has been longing for all along.

“Search me, God, and know my heart... Test me and know my anxious thoughts... Lead me in the way everlasting.” – Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV)

References:

1. Maureen Salamon, *“Break the Cycle,” Harvard Health Publishing*, Jan 1, 2024. (Discusses how rumination fuels anxiety and depression) ¹ ³ .
2. Sunshine City Counseling Team, *“5 Ways Your Thoughts Affect Your Mood and Well-Being,”* Apr 5, 2023. (Notes a NIH study showing journaling reduced anxiety ~9% in patients) ¹⁰ .
3. Johnson et al., *“Online Positive Affect Journaling for Patients with Anxiety – A Randomized Trial,” JMIR Mental Health*, 2018. (Found 12 weeks of journaling led to decreased anxiety and improved resilience vs. usual care) ⁹ .
4. Alexa Baz, LCSW, *“Rewrite and Rewire Your Brain with Journaling,”* Feb 6, 2025. (Explains neuroscience of journaling: writing calms the amygdala and boosts logical brain activity) ⁷ ¹² .
5. Carolyn V. (Serenity in Suffering blog), *“Mindfulness Journal Prompts for Daily Quiet Time,”* 2021. (Anecdotal insights on Christian mindfulness journaling and self-examination) ⁶ ⁵ .
6. John J. Ratey, MD, *“Can Exercise Help Treat Anxiety?” Harvard Health Blog*, Oct 24, 2019. (Reports that regular aerobic exercise powerfully reduces anxiety and stress reactivity) ¹⁹ ¹⁸ .
7. Focus on the Family, *“Anxiety Disorders – FAQ,”* by Dr. Jared Pingleton et al., 2016. (Christian perspective on anxiety treatment; affirms that seeking therapy/medication is not a lack of faith) ²³ ²⁷ .
8. **Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV).** Scripture quotations are from the NIV (Biblica, 2011). Key verses referenced include Philippians 4:6-7, Matthew 6:34, 1 Peter 5:7, 2 Corinthians 10:5, Romans 12:2, Isaiah 26:3, Luke 10:41-42, Psalm 139:23-24, among others.

¹ ² ³ ¹⁷ Break the cycle - Harvard Health
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/break-the-cycle>

⁴ Journaling and Your Health | American Diabetes Association
<https://diabetes.org/health-wellness/mental-health/journaling-your-health>

⁵ ⁶ ¹⁴ ¹⁵ ¹⁶ Mindfulness Journal Prompts For Daily Quiet Time - Serenity in Suffering
<https://serenityinsuffering.com/mindfulness-journal-prompts-for-daily-quiet-time/>



7 12 13 Rewrite and Rewire Your Brain with Journaling — Alexa Baz LCSW

<https://www.alexabaz.com/blog/2025/2/6/rewrite-your-brain>

8 Putting feelings into words: affect labeling disrupts amygdala activity ...

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17576282/>

9 11 Online Positive Affect Journaling in the Improvement of Mental Distress and Well-Being in General Medical Patients With Elevated Anxiety Symptoms: A Preliminary Randomized Controlled Trial - PMC

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6305886/>

10 5 Ways Your Thoughts Affect Your Mood and Well-Being

<https://www.sunshinecitycounseling.com/blog/5-ways-your-thoughts-affect-your-mood-and-well-being>

18 19 20 Can exercise help treat anxiety? - Harvard Health

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/can-exercise-help-treat-anxiety-2019102418096>

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 29 30 Anxiety Disorders — Frequently Asked Questions - Focus on the Family

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/get-help/anxiety-disorders-ai-frequently-asked-questions/>

28 Prozac and the Promises of God

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/prozac-and-the-promises-of-god>

31 A Christian Perspective on Antidepressants

<https://resources.cmda.org/a-christian-perspective-on-antidepressants/>