

Application Guide

THE SURPRISING SOLUTION TO OVERTHINKING WITH JON ACUFF



BOTTOM LINE:

Most people struggle with overthinking, but you can change overthinking from a super problem into a superpower.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- I. **Thought Soundtrack:** A repetitive thought that's in the background of your life but has the power to change a moment and shape your day
- II. **Overthinking:** When what you think gets in the way of what you want
 - A. When you don't pursue the thing you desire, that desire doesn't go away; it turns into bitterness.
 - B. Goals you don't finish don't disappear; they become ghosts that haunt you.
 - C. Overthinking isn't a personality trait; it's the **sneakiest form of fear** that steals opportunities, time, creativity, and goals.
- III. The Challenge of Overthinking: Our thoughts turn into action, and action turns into results.
 - A. All too often leaders focus on the results they want, but never change the underlying thoughts that shape the entire culture of the organization.
 - B. Inaction breeds overthinking because inaction opens you up to multiple decision spaces. When you act, you eliminate the opportunity for overthinking because the decisions are made and you don't have to go back and forth between *should I or shouldn't I*.
- IV. Three Things to Look for When Pursuing an Idea:
 - A. Is there a personal connection?
 - B. Is there a need?
 - C. Is there a spot for me in the marketplace or is it already overcrowded?
- V. Retire, Replace, Repeat.
 - A. You can actually create new thoughts that will push you forward. The brain wants to think things, because it's designed to do so.
 - B. What people need is to be able to **retire** their broken soundtracks, to learn how to **replace** them with new ones, and then **repeat** the new ones so often they become as automatic as your old thoughts.
- VI. 30-Second Exercise to Identify a Broken Soundtrack:
 - A. Write down a goal.
 - B. Now listen to the first thoughts that come when you think about that goal.
 1. Listen to the reaction because every reaction is a learning opportunity.
 2. Is your reaction positive and pushing toward action or negative and keeping you stuck?
- VII. Three Questions to Ask Once You've Identified a Broken Soundtrack:
 - A. Is it true? One of the greatest mistakes you make is assuming that all your thoughts are true.
 - B. Is it helpful? There are some things in life that are true but not helpful.
 - C. Is it kind? If you said it to a friend, would they still want to be your friend?

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VIII. Turn It Down. People think the solution to stress and overthinking is going to be an on/off switch, but it's actually a dial. When life gets loud, it's our job to turn down the volume.

A. Turn-down techniques for broken soundtracks:

1. Take a nap.
2. Write a thank-you note to someone.
3. Find something you love and go do it.

B. In a moment of clarity, write down 5-10 things that calm the stress for you— because if you wait until you're in the middle of the stress, you will likely forget them.

IX. How to Repeat a New Soundtrack: Make a symbol that is:

- A. Personal (It's connected to you.)
- B. Visible (You actually see it.)
- C. Simple (You actually use it.)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. Can you identify a broken soundtrack you are listening to right now?
2. How have the broken soundtracks in your life affected your personal and/or professional goals?
3. What could you accomplish if overthinking didn't prevent you from taking action?
4. What is one step you can take to release untrue, unhelpful, or unkind thoughts that play over and over again in your mind?
5. What are three things that bring light to your life and reduce your stress?

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RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- *Finish: Give Yourself the Gift of Done* by Jon Acuff
- *Soundtracks: The Surprising Solution to Overthinking* by Jon Acuff