

## TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 192: STOP OVERTHINKING FOR A WHILE

I'm Jill Baughan, and you're listening to the podcast called Find Joy...No Matter What.

This is Episode 192.

If you're in a tough place right now, your joy may seem like it's hiding--or gone.

I understand. But it's still there, I promise, just waiting to be resurrected. And this podcast is designed to help you do just that...no matter what else is going on in your life.

For just a few minutes each week, I'll tell you a story--one that just might inspire a way to uncover a piece of joy you might be looking for. Then, we'll consider how it might speak to your life, because even though you'll hear quite a few of my stories during our time together, I believe you'll find your own in every one of mine.

Finally, I'll offer a benediction to send you into your day--or into your night. So. If you're up for doing joy shots with a friend today...have a listen.

Calling all overthinkers: Stop it for a hot minute. You know who you are.

*Some people are plagued with a constant barrage of thoughts all the time, says writer Amy Morin. Chronic overthinkers rehash conversations they had yesterday, second-guess every decision they make, and imagine disastrous outcomes all day, every day.*

But the truth is—everyone overthinks situations sometimes. Maybe you, like me, have found your own mind spiraling into worst case scenarios, engaging in way too much unnecessary “What if-ing,” or obsessing about making the wrong decision. Maybe you would love to stop making way too many things way too complicated for a while and give your brain and your very soul a rest. Maybe you would love to put your “overthoughts” in a drawer, and slam that puppy shut.

Granted, sometimes thinking things through helps us prepare for important life events like, let's say, escaping a home fire or getting old. But in our time together we'll focus on stuff that, in the grand scheme of things won't really matter, or things over which you have no control. There's a point at which overthinking even these things becomes counterproductive at best and debilitating at worst.

How, though, can we stop—or at least slow down—this joy stealer of great magnitude?

1. Well, I've found it helpful to follow the example of **children**, especially in regard to gift giving. Maybe you set yourself up for stress by thinking you have to give the perfect gift for every occasion. Something memorable, something that will thrill and surprise the receiver. Something original, creative, funny, touching—anything but ho hum. But I have noticed that children have this non-overthinking thing nailed.

For instance, one Christmas, my husband Ben received a special gift from our grandson, young Ben. It was a gift he was so proud of—one that he chose on a whim, one that reminded him of the precious character of his beloved PawPaw, and he couldn't wait for PawPaw to open this gift straight from the heart: It was a coffee mug shaped like a golden toilet.

I am not even kidding. Nothing more to say here. Except maybe “Bottoms up!”

Of course, old Ben—while he hasn't been able to make himself actually drink from it—truly thought it was amazing, because, you know, he so loved the heart of the giver—the giver who didn't think twice about whether his gift would be “useful” or not.

Ben's great aunt had this mental exercise nailed. She used to run out a couple days before Christmas to get gifts for her nieces and nephews. She never asked anyone what they “wanted”; she just cavorted around stores picking up things she thought people might like. And while everyone else was stressing and overthinking about the gifts they were giving, she just had a great time shopping. Granted, we may not have always been “wowed” by the gifts themselves, but were forever wowed by her joyful procurement process.

2. Another way to help you stop overthinking is to ask a guy—or at least **hang around a guy**. At the risk of stereotyping, I have to say that the men in my life are better at avoiding overthinking than a lot of women. I'd love to have this gift.

Author and relationship expert Mark Gungor says, *Men's brains are made up of little boxes. We have a box for everything. We have a box for the car. A box for the job. A box for the money. A box for you. A box for the kids. And the rule is, the boxes don't touch. When a man discusses a particular subject, we go to that particular box, we pull that box out, we open the box, we discuss only what's in that box. Then we close the box and put it away, being very very careful not to touch another box. We have a box in our brain with nothing in it. Of all the boxes a man has in his brain, the nothing box is our favorite box.*

If you then, like me, have ever asked a man what he's thinking about and he says, “Nothing,” chances are he's telling the truth. I do not claim to understand this. How can a person think about nothing? I'm never thinking about nothing. But I find it very helpful, when I'm spiraling or stressing, to hang around such people who exude the calm energy of a total mental vacuum.

When our daughter was a teenager, for instance, I could never go to sleep until she came home on a Saturday night, no matter what time it was. Meanwhile, my husband says to me, “Why are you so worried? If something happens somebody will call us.” Then he would

immediately roll over and start snoring, leaving me still looking wide-eyed at the ceiling, but nonetheless feeling a little calmer.

3. Third, it's helpful **to change the channel**. Amy Morin says that *telling yourself to stop thinking about something will backfire*. (Ever see that Bob Newhart sketch where he plays

the therapist, seeing the client who says she has a terrible fear of being buried in a box? He says he has the solution to her problem in two words. Of course, she's excited about that, as he says, "Okay, here it is. Are you ready?" She nods. "STOP IT!" he yells. And there it is. The answer to all her obsessions. "STOP IT! STOP IT! STOP IT!" And it's funny because, well, it's ridiculous.) As Morin says, *The more you try to prevent a thought from entering your brain, the more likely it is to keep popping up.* So here's something you can do: *Change the channel in your brain by changing your activity. Exercise, engage in conversation on a completely different subject, or work on a project that distracts you. Doing something different will put an end to the barrage of negative thoughts.*

4. Another mental trick that can help with superficial and serious overthoughts, from "I can't ask people over because our house is a mess" to "What if something terrible happens to someone I love?" is this: ***Don't think of what can go wrong, but what can go right.*** *In many cases, overthinking is caused by a single emotion: fear. When you focus on all the negative things that might happen, it's easy to become paralyzed. Next time you sense that you starting to spiral in that direction, stop. Visualize all the things that can go right and keep those thoughts present and up front.*

5. Finally, Cindy Lamothe, for *Healthline*, suggests that you **do something nice for someone else.**

*Trying to ease the load for someone else can help you put things in perspective. Think of ways you can be of service to someone going through a difficult time.*

*Does your friend who's in the middle of a divorce need a few hours of child care? Can you pick up groceries for your neighbor who's been sick?*

*Realizing you have the power to make someone's day better can keep negative thoughts from taking over. It also gives you something productive to focus on instead of your never-ending stream of thoughts.*

And so, my friend, when you find your brain spiraling out of control, dive bombing toward a worst-case scenario or when you are rendered paralyzed by your own powerlessness, or when you find yourself stagnant, unwilling to take action on your life because your overactive brain keeps reminding you of all that could go sideways,

May you—even in the middle of all that, even then—find peace of mind, knowing that the God of the Universe is on your side, never leaving your side...no matter what.

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know people who might benefit from spending a little less time in their own heads, I invite you to share this podcast with them, and subscribe yourself on iTunes, or wherever you listen to podcasts. Or you can go to my website at [jillbaughan.com](http://jillbaughan.com), click on a podcast episode and sign up to receive episodes in your inbox. Just don't miss a single one, because I so look forward to being with you again soon. And just so you know, the podcast

celebrates its 4<sup>th</sup> birthday this month! Yes, it was born in 2020, just in time to help save your sanity. And mine. And it's about time for a little evolution. So! I'll be comin' atcha twice a month from here on out—to give you time to stay up to date, and to give me the head and the heart space to work on some new additional ways to help you find joy.

In the meantime, ease up on the overthinking, my friend. And always, always remember: if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...

NOTES:

Gungor, Mark. "Men's Brains and Women's Brains."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=SZ6mVumHY9I>

Lamothe, Cindy. "14 Way to Stop Overthinking." *Healthline*, July 7, 2022.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/how-to-stop-overthinking#face-your-fears>

Morin, Amy. "6 Easy Ways to Stop Overthinking Every Little Thing (and Just Enjoy Your Life.)" *Inc.*, January 24, 2022.

<https://www.inc.com/amy-morin/6-ways-to-stop-overthinking-everything.html>