

Stop Replaying Work at 3 A.M.

*The R.E.S.T. Method™ — A 4-Week Program to End
Post-Meeting Spirals and Sleep Better*



Maren Cole

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This book is designed to provide educational and practical information on the subject matter covered. It is not a substitute for professional medical, psychological, or mental health advice, diagnosis, or treatment. See “Before You Begin: Support + Safety” for guidance on when to seek professional support.

First edition.

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FRONT MATTER

A Note to the Overthinking Professional

If you're reading this after a long day—maybe even at night—there's a good chance your brain is doing that familiar thing:

- replaying a meeting line-by-line
- re-reading a Slack message in your head
- wondering what your manager really meant
- trying to “solve” a social moment you can't control

You're not broken. You're not weak. You're not “too sensitive.”

You're stuck in a loop that thousands of smart, capable young professionals get stuck in—especially in modern work environments where feedback is subtle, communication is constant, and silence can feel like danger.

This book is built for one specific reality:

You close your laptop, but your mind keeps working.

Over the next four weeks, you'll learn a simple method called R.E.S.T. that helps you stop spiraling after work conversations and close the day on purpose—so you can sleep, recover, and show up tomorrow without the 3 A.M. replay.

This isn't a book you're meant to “finish someday.” It's a program you're meant to use.

You don't need perfect consistency. You don't need long writing sessions. You only need one mindset shift:

Consistency beats intensity.

If you do a little bit each day—even imperfectly—you'll be surprised how quickly your brain starts learning a new default response.

Let's get you some relief.

Before You Begin: Support + Safety

This workbook is educational and practical. It is not therapy, and it's not a substitute for professional medical or mental health care.

This program is designed to help with work-related rumination, anxiety loops, and overthinking habits—especially at night. It can be very effective for those patterns.

If any of the following are true, consider adding professional support alongside this program:

- Your sleep has been severely disrupted for weeks or months
- Anxiety causes panic attacks, vomiting, or feeling out of control
- You're experiencing depression symptoms that are worsening
- You're using alcohol/drugs to fall asleep or calm down

- You feel unsafe, hopeless, or like you might harm yourself

If you are in immediate danger or feel at risk of harming yourself, contact your local emergency number or a local crisis hotline right now. You deserve real-time support.

Good news: Many people use this workbook alongside therapy, coaching, or medication and find it complements those supports beautifully—because it gives them a simple daily structure.

How to Use This Book (and Still Have a Life)

This is a 4-week program built for people with jobs, deadlines, and limited mental bandwidth.

You'll get the best results if you treat it like a small daily routine—not a giant self-improvement project.

The Time Commitment

- Standard pace: 10–20 minutes/day
- Busy-week pace: 5–10 minutes/day
- Crisis-mode pace: 2–5 minutes/day (yes, this counts)

You do not need long journaling sessions. If you try to do too much, perfectionism will take over and you'll stop.

The Three Pacing Options

- 1) **Standard Pace (Recommended)** Use this if you can commit to a short daily practice. Daily (10–20 minutes): Loop Log (3 minutes), the week's main exercise (5–12 minutes), a short closing step at night (optional but helpful).
- 2) **Busy-Week Pace** Use this if work is intense or you're traveling. Daily (5–10 minutes): Loop Log (3 minutes), one quick tool only (Story Extraction or Evidence Bank or R.E.S.T. in 5). Busy weeks are not failures. They are normal.
- 3) **Crisis Mode (Bare Minimum)** Use this if you're overwhelmed, exhausted, or in a high-threat week (reviews, presentations, conflict). Daily (2–5 minutes): R.E.S.T. in 5 minutes only (or even the 2-minute version). If you do the bare minimum consistently, you still get results—because you're teaching your brain a new response pattern.

What to Do If You Miss a Day

Don't catch up. Don't binge. Don't punish yourself.

Do this instead: skip the missed day(s), restart today with one small action (Loop Log or R.E.S.T. in 5), continue forward.

This program is designed to work even with imperfect consistency.

The “Don't Make This Worse” Rule

Some people accidentally turn self-help into a new obsession. Don't do that.

- Don't log loops all day long. Once per day is enough.
- Don't analyze every thought. Pick one loop and practice on that.
- If you feel yourself spiraling while doing the exercises, stop and use R.E.S.T. in 5.

The goal is relief and closure—not perfect insight.

Quick Start (30 Minutes)

You can start today. You do not need to read the whole book first.

Here's your 30-minute setup:

What You'll Need

- A notebook or your notes app or the digital templates
- 30 minutes of quiet
- A willingness to write imperfectly

Step 1: Your Baseline Snapshot (10 minutes)

Write your answers quickly—no overthinking.

1. How long does it usually take you to fall asleep? (estimate in minutes)
2. How long do you usually replay work conversations at night? (estimate in minutes)
3. How often does work overthinking wake you up at night? (Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Often)
4. How intense is your overthinking loop on average? (0–10, 0 = calm, 10 = unbearable)
5. Pick your top 3 work triggers (choose three): feedback from manager, silence/delayed reply, meetings where you spoke up, meetings where you didn't speak up, presentations, ambiguous messages ("can we talk?"), social moments/jokes/awkwardness, mistakes (real or feared)

These become your focus points for the first two weeks. Keep this page — you'll compare against it at the end of Week 4.

Step 2: Choose Your Format (5 minutes)

Pick one path: paper path (print templates or copy them into a notebook) or digital path (use the provided files or your own notes app / spreadsheet). Choose what you'll actually use when tired at night. Not what sounds "best."

Step 3: Set Up Your Tools (5 minutes)

Create (or open) these sections: Loop Log, Evidence Bank, R.E.S.T. in 5 Minutes sheet. Even if they're empty, having them ready reduces friction.

Step 4: Emergency Relief Tool (10 minutes)

R.E.S.T. in 5 Minutes — Quick Start Version

Use this whenever you're in a loop—especially before bed.

R — Recognize (30 seconds) What am I looping about? “I keep replaying...” Rate the intensity (0–10): ____

E — Extract (1 minute) Write the story in 1–2 lines: Story about me: “This means I’m...” Story about others/future: “They think...” / “This will lead to...”

S — Scan (1–2 minutes) Write 1–2 facts that don’t fully support the worst story: “A fact that doesn’t match this story is...” “Another fact is...” Then write a balanced possibility (not forced positivity): “It’s possible that...”

T — Transition (1 minute) Write a closing sentence for tonight: “I’ve done what I can for today. Tomorrow-me will handle the rest.” “This thought can exist, but it doesn’t run my night.” “I choose rest over more analysis.” Optional: choose one tiny action for tomorrow (or “no action needed”).

If You Only Do One Thing Tonight...

1. Open the R.E.S.T. in 5 sheet.
2. Do it once on the loop you’re having right now.
3. Close the book and go to bed. That’s a full win. That counts as Day 1.

If you wake up at 3 A.M., do R.E.S.T. once again—then stop and return to sleep.

Your Progress Tracker

Progress in this program usually looks like: loops become shorter before they become rarer; intensity drops from 8/10 to 6/10 before it drops to 3/10; you still have thoughts, but you stop getting trapped inside them.

Track only three things. Keep it simple.

The Three Metrics (Weekly)

1. Minutes to fall asleep (estimate)
2. Minutes spent replaying at night (estimate)
3. Average loop intensity (0–10)

Weekly Check-In (5 minutes, once per week)

At the end of each week, answer: What were my top triggers this week? What tool helped the most? What is one thing that improved (even slightly)? What do I want to focus on next week?

That’s enough. Over-tracking can turn into a new form of anxiety.

Accessing Your Templates

Your purchase includes digital templates you can use on mobile or print.

What’s Included

- Loop Log (daily 3-minute page)
- Story Extraction Worksheet
- Evidence Bank template
- R.E.S.T. in 5 minutes sheet (night + 3 A.M.)
- Nightly Decompression Ritual templates (3 styles)
- Scripts Library (common work scenarios)

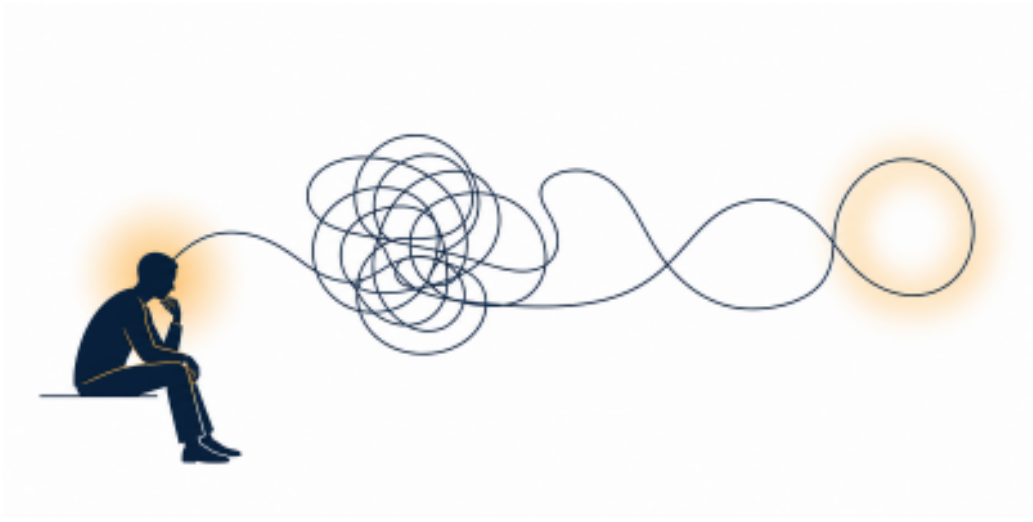
Where to Find Them

Check the confirmation email or account page from your purchase for a direct download link. If you can't find it: check that you're logged into the same account used to purchase; look for a receipt email with a direct access link; try opening on desktop if mobile hides the downloads section.

Best Practice (So You Don't Quit Later)

Save these two things where you can reach them fast: the R.E.S.T. in 5 minutes sheet, and the Loop Log. When you're tired or spiraling, convenience is everything.

PART I — Why Work Overthinking Hits So Hard



Shortcut for exhausted readers: if you want relief tonight, skip ahead to Week 1. You can come back to Part I later. This section exists so you can think: “Oh. That’s why.” (and stop treating your brain like an enemy).

Chapter 1 — The Young Professional Overthinking Trap



The Scene (This Might Be You)

You're finally in bed. The day is technically over.

And yet your brain opens the same tab again: "Did I sound stupid in that meeting?" "Why did it go quiet after I spoke?" "My manager's face changed... was that about me?" "Why did they reply with just a thumbs-up?"

You tell yourself you'll think about it for one more minute.

But one more minute becomes forty. And when you check the clock... it's 3:00 a.m.

If this is familiar, you're not "too sensitive" or "broken."

You're caught in a pattern that modern work environments are almost perfectly designed to trigger.

Why Work Hits Your Self-Esteem So Hard

Work isn't just tasks. Work is: social evaluation (how are they judging me?), uncertainty (what did that mean?), identity (am I actually competent?), safety (can I lose respect, opportunities, stability?).

For young professionals, the volume is turned up because: you're still building internal confidence; you have fewer "stored receipts" that prove you're fine; you're surrounded by people who look more senior; small cues can feel like big verdicts.

Your brain doesn't experience this as "just a meeting." It experiences it as: belonging, status, safety.

The 5 Most Common Overthinking Patterns at Work

1. The post-meeting replay — You re-run your words, their reactions, the silence, the tone shift—like you're reviewing security footage.

2. Slack/email mind-reading — One short message becomes a full story: “Can we talk tomorrow?” “Ok.” A lone thumbs-up. “Noted.” Your brain fills the gaps with anxiety.
3. Feedback dread — Any suggestion for improvement becomes a threat: “Let’s refine this...” “This isn’t quite it...” “We need to adjust...”
4. The performance-mode loop — You’re thinking more about how you appeared than what you did: “How did I come across? Was I awkward? Did I look insecure?”
5. The mistake spiral (real or imagined) — A small error becomes “proof” you don’t belong: “I messed up. I’m exposed. They’ll never forget this.”

Important: work overthinking is rarely “thinking too much.” It’s your brain trying to find certainty where there isn’t any—so it can feel safe.

Mini-Quiz: Your Work Overthinking Type

This isn’t a diagnosis. It’s a fast way to recognize your pattern so you can use the tools in this book more effectively.

Rate each statement: 0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often, 3 = almost always

1. I rewrite messages multiple times so I don’t “sound wrong.”
2. If someone replies briefly, I assume they’re annoyed.
3. After meetings, I replay my wording with embarrassment.
4. I focus on how I came across more than what I contributed.
5. A small mistake feels like proof I’m not good enough.
6. I obsess over what my manager “really meant.”
7. My brain collects mistakes like evidence in a case against me.
8. I can’t relax until I have a plan to “fix” what happened.
9. I jump to extreme outcomes (fired, sidelined, humiliated).
10. My body goes tense even when nothing is obviously wrong.

Which Profile Shows Up Most?

- A) The Mind-Reader (items 1, 2, 6) — You suffer most from ambiguity. You try to decode people.
- B) The Prosecutor (items 5, 7) — You build a case against yourself from small data points.
- C) The Performer (items 3, 4) — You live in performance mode—constantly evaluating how you appeared.
- D) The Fixer (item 8) — You can’t rest until there’s a plan, even when the “problem” is imagined.
- E) The Catastrophizer (item 9) — Your brain jumps to worst-case outcomes to feel prepared.
- F) The Body-Alarmed (item 10) — Your nervous system reacts before you even know why.

You may be more than one. Most people are. The win here is simple: naming your pattern reduces shame and increases control.

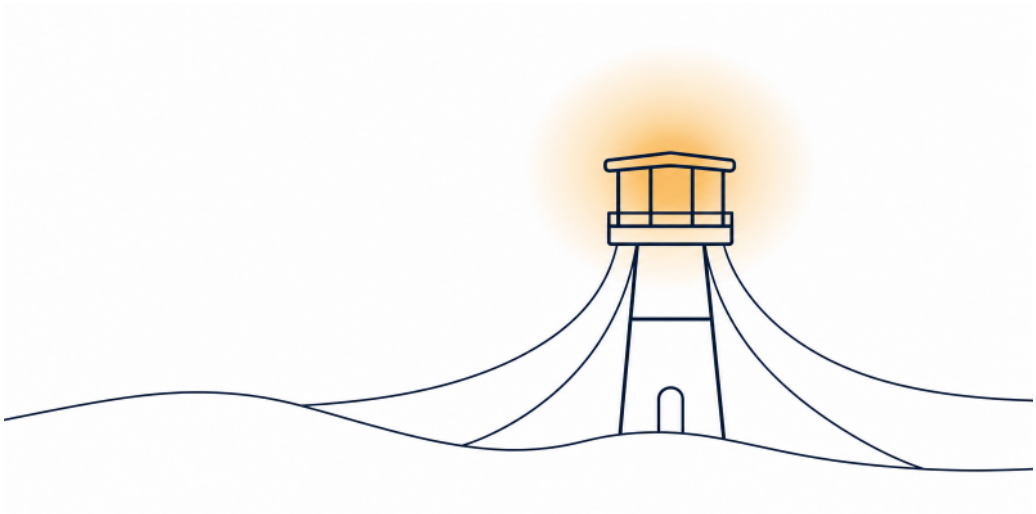
2-Minute Action: Your Overthinking Signature

Fill this in quickly: My top 2 patterns are: ____ and _____. My #1 work trigger is: _____.
When it hits, my brain usually says: _____.

That's enough to begin.

Next: why your brain does this (without a boring lecture).

Chapter 2 — Your Brain at Work (Without the Boring Neuroscience)



Let's remove one idea immediately: you are not "crazy." Your brain is running a protection system—just a little too aggressively for modern work.

Think of your brain like an overprotective security guard. It has three priorities: keep you accepted by the group, prevent rejection and humiliation, protect your position and stability.

At work, those translate into: approval, status, competence, trust, safety.

1) Social Threat Feels Like Real Threat

Your body responds to social signals the way it responds to danger. At work, "social threat" can look like: your manager's tone shifts, someone doesn't respond, silence after you speak, a short message with no warmth, "Can we talk tomorrow?"

Your brain translates it as: "Risk detected. Analyze immediately." That analysis is what becomes replay.

2) Ambiguity Is Fuel (and Slack Is Gasoline)

Modern work creates uncertainty on purpose: text without tone, emojis without context, camera-off meetings, silence without explanation, feedback that's vague ("Let's tighten this up").

When there isn't enough information, your brain fills the gap. And because your brain is designed to keep you safe, it often chooses the most threatening interpretation: "If I assume the worst, I'm prepared." It's not cruelty. It's misfiring protection.

3) Your Brain Stores Criticism and Deletes "Normal"

Here's the unfair math your brain likes: one negative cue weighs more than ten normal cues; one awkward moment becomes a "receipt"; ten neutral moments become "nothing."

That's why you can remember the silence after your comment—and forget that nobody criticized you, that you delivered the work, that you've been trusted before, that people ask you for input.

This bias makes it feel like something is wrong, even when the day was mostly... fine.

Why It Gets Worse at Night (and Shows Up at 3 A.M.)

At night, three things change: fewer distractions (nothing pulls your brain away), lower mental energy (tired brains have weaker “stop” signals), more need for closure (your system wants to “solve” the day before sleep).

So the loop gets louder. If you wake up at 3 A.M., your brain often does something brutal but predictable: it grabs the most unresolved social moment from the day and tries to finish the story.

That's why this program focuses so heavily on closure, not perfect calm.

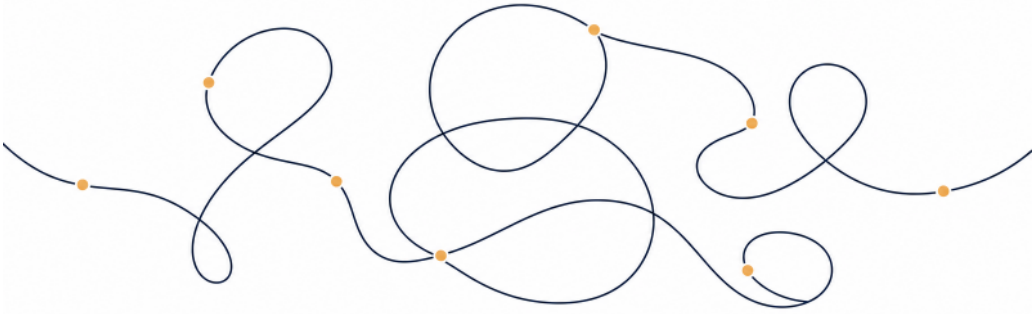
2-Minute Action: Your Body's Early Warning Signal

Overthinking often starts in the body before it starts in words. Circle the first place you usually feel it: jaw tension, chest tightness, stomach drop, throat tightness, restless legs, headache, heat/flushing, shallow breathing.

Now finish this sentence: “When a loop starts, my body's first signal is usually ____.”

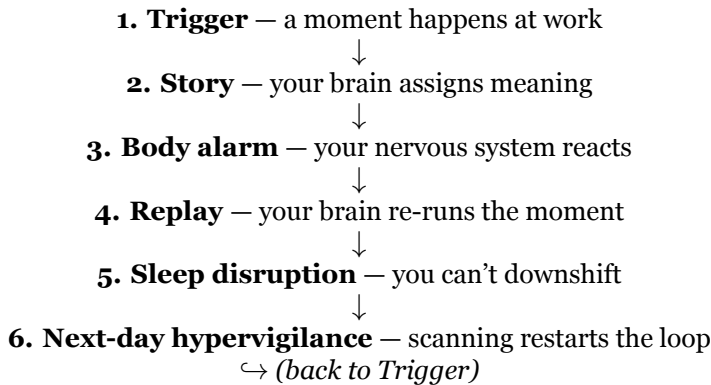
This will make Week 1 easier, because your body gives you the earliest alarm.

Chapter 3 — The Work Loop Map



You don't need to stop having thoughts. You need a new response when the loop starts. First, we map the loop clearly (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 — The Work Overthinking Loop



Most workplace spirals follow the same structure:

1. **Trigger** — A moment happens at work: “Can we talk tomorrow?”, a neutral face in a meeting, silence after you speak, feedback that’s slightly unclear.
2. **Story** — Your brain assigns meaning: “They think I’m incompetent.” “They’re annoyed with me.” “I’m being exposed.”
3. **Body alarm** — Your nervous system reacts: tight chest, stomach drop, tension, restlessness.
4. **Replay** — Your brain re-runs the moment to find certainty. It replays the sentence, the tone, the facial expression, the Slack message.
5. **Sleep disruption** — You can’t fully downshift because the day feels “open.”
6. **Next-day hypervigilance** — You go into tomorrow scanning for confirmation. Which creates more triggers. Which restarts the loop.

This is why overthinking feels like a trap: it becomes self-feeding.

Reflection vs. Rumination: The 2-Question Test

Not all thinking is bad. Sometimes you're reflecting and learning.

Use this fast test: 1) Am I learning something new? 2) Is this leading to a clear next step?

If the answer is no and no, you're not reflecting—you're ruminating. That means you don't need "more thinking." You need a tool. This test comes back throughout the book — memorize it now and you won't need to re-read this page.

What This Looks Like in Real Life

A typical timeline: 3:10 p.m. Meeting ends. You notice your manager's tone change. 5:30 p.m. You remember it again on your commute. 9:45 p.m. The story gets stronger: "They think I'm not good enough." 12:30 a.m. You're tired, but your brain insists you must "solve" it. 3:00 a.m. You wake up and the replay starts automatically.

The problem isn't that you care. The problem is your brain treats ambiguity like a fire alarm.

2-Minute Action: Map Your Most Common Loop

Fill this in quickly: Trigger: what happened? (facts only). Story: what did your brain say it meant? Body alarm: what did you feel physically? Replay behavior: what did your mind keep doing? Result: what did it cost you? (sleep, mood, focus)

Now write one sentence: "My loop usually starts when ____ happens." That's your starting point.

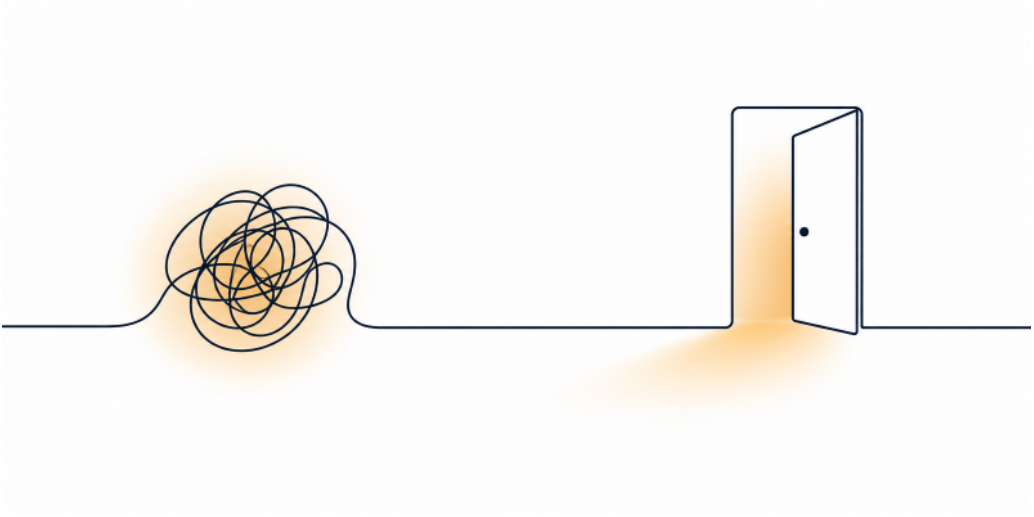
Bridge into Week 1

You now have the map. Next, we start building your new default response.

Week 1 is simple: catch the loop earlier than you usually do. Not fix it. Not debate it. Just catch it.

Week 1 starts now.

PART II — The R.E.S.T. Method™ + Your Toolkit



Part I helped you see the pattern. Part II gives you the response.

Chapter 4 — The R.E.S.T. Method™



Your New Default Response to Work Replays

You don't need a different personality. You don't need to "stop caring." You don't need to become an unbothered robot.

You need a new default response for the moment your brain starts replaying work.

That's what R.E.S.T. is.

The Problem with "Just Calm Down"

Most people respond to a spiral in one of two ways:

1. Argue with the thought — "That's not true. Stop thinking that. Be rational." (This often fails at 1 a.m. when your brain is tired and dramatic.)
2. Let it run — "I'll just think it through until I feel better." (This turns into 40 minutes of replay and zero closure.)

R.E.S.T. is different. It doesn't ask you to win an argument. It asks you to change gears (see Figure 4.1).

The R.E.S.T. Steps (Plain Language)

Figure 4.1 — The R.E.S.T. Method

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| R — Recognize | "I'm looping." |
| ↓ | |
| E — Extract | "Here's the story my brain is telling." |
| ↓ | |
| S — Scan | "What are the actual facts and evidence?" |
| ↓ | |
| T — Transition | "Close for tonight. Choose the next small action (or no action)." |

That's it. You're not chasing perfect calm. You're building a reliable off-ramp.

A Realistic Example: The "Can We Talk Tomorrow?" Spiral

Here's a classic trigger. It's 4:58 p.m. You get a message from your manager: "Can we talk tomorrow morning?" No context. No emoji. No explanation.

What your brain does by default: story appears immediately ("I'm in trouble"), body alarm (stomach drop, chest tightness), replay begins ("What did I do wrong? Was it that meeting? That email?"), sleep impact (your brain keeps trying to solve something you can't solve tonight).

Now let's run R.E.S.T. on this.

R — Recognize (30–60 seconds) The goal here is not insight. It's a label. Write: Loop topic: "I'm replaying my manager's message about talking tomorrow." Intensity (0–10): 7/10. That tiny label matters because it creates separation: "I am having a loop." not "This is reality." Common mistake: waiting until you feel calm to start. Start while you're still activated.

E — Extract (1–2 minutes) Now you pull the story out of the fog. Two prompts: Story about me: "This means I'm ____." Story about others/future: "They think ____ / This will lead to ____." Example: Story about me: "This means I messed up and I'm unreliable." Story about others/future: "My manager thinks I'm underperforming. I'm going to get criticized or put on notice." Notice what happened: the fear became specific. Specific is workable. Fog is not. Common mistake: writing a novel. Keep it to 1–3 lines. Short is powerful.

S — Scan (1–2 minutes) This is the step that retrains your "bad news filter." You are not forcing positivity. You are asking for a fair trial. Write 1–2 facts that don't fully support the worst story. Examples: "My manager also scheduled 1:1s like this before for planning." "Last week they thanked me for finishing the client draft." "I've made mistakes before and it wasn't catastrophic." "This message contains zero actual information—my brain filled the rest in." Then write a balanced possibility: "It's possible this is routine or about planning. If it is feedback, I can handle it tomorrow with a clearer mind." Common mistake: trying to feel convinced. You don't need 100% belief. You need a second plausible story.

T — Transition (1 minute) This is the closure step. It ends the loop for tonight. You do two things: 1) Write a closing sentence. 2) Choose a next tiny action (or "no action needed"). Example: Closing sentence: "I don't have enough information tonight. I can handle tomorrow when I know more. Tonight is for rest." Tiny action: "Tomorrow I'll ask: 'What would you like to discuss so I can prepare?'" That's Transition. It converts anxiety into a contained plan—or a decision to stop. Common mistake: using Transition to create a giant plan. Tiny action only. Your goal is sleep, not a strategy document.

The Method in One Line

R.E.S.T. turns: "I must solve this right now" into "I've named it, captured it, checked reality, and closed the day." That's why it works for nighttime spirals.

The Two Versions You'll Use Most

The 2-minute "workday" version — Use this after a stressful meeting or message: R: "Loop started." E: "Story: they think I'm incompetent." S: "Evidence: nothing actually happened; neutral faces are not proof." T: "I'll review this later; right now I return to my task." This prevents the loop from growing legs.

The 5-minute “night” version — Use before bed or at 3 A.M. (you already have it in Quick Start). In Week 4, you’ll integrate it into a nightly ritual.

A 2-Minute Action Right Now

Before you move on: write one sentence: “The loop I’m most likely to have tonight is about ____.” Now write a closing sentence you can reuse: “I can’t solve this tonight. Tomorrow-me will handle it. Tonight I rest.” That’s not cheesy. That’s training.

Chapter 5 — Your Toolkit



Templates and Rituals That Make R.E.S.T. Easy to Use

A method is only useful if you can use it when you're tired. So your toolkit is designed for real life: low energy, busy weeks, messy emotions, not enough time, brains that want certainty.

You are not meant to use every tool every day. You're meant to use the right tool at the right time (see Figure 5.1).

The Toolkit Map: What to Use When

Figure 5.1 — Toolkit Map

When	Tool	What it does
Daily (3 min)	Loop Log	Catches patterns and triggers sooner
Story is sticky (5–12 min)	Story Extraction Worksheet	Turns anxiety fog into a clear storyline
Retraining your brain (3–7 min)	Evidence Bank	Collects wins, neutrals, contradictions
You're spiraling (2–5 min)	R.E.S.T. in 5 Minutes	Emergency off-ramp (night + 3 A.M.)
End the day (5–15 min)	Nightly Decompression Ritual	Creates closure
Need language (30 sec)	Scripts Library	Words for common scenarios

Tool 1: The Loop Log

The 3-minute daily pattern detector. When to use it: once per day, ideally after work. Why it matters: it trains Recognize (Week 1) and reveals your top triggers. What it

does: captures one loop, shows you what sets you off, makes your spirals predictable (predictable = less scary). Micro rule: one loop per day is enough.

Tool 2: Story Extraction Worksheet

Turn fog into a sentence you can work with. When to use it: when a loop keeps returning. Why it matters: anxiety loses power when it becomes specific. Core move: Event -> Meaning -> Threat.

Tool 3: The Evidence Bank

Train your brain to store the full reality. When to use it: nightly, or anytime something contradicts your worst story. Why it matters: your brain remembers criticism and deletes neutral/positive data. Evidence types: wins (clear positives), neutrals (nothing bad happened—very powerful), contradictions (directly clashes with the negative story).

Tool 4: R.E.S.T. in 5 Minutes

The emergency off-ramp (night + 3 A.M.). When to use it: before bed, after stressful moments, or when you wake at night. Why it matters: it stops you from negotiating with anxiety at 1 a.m. Rule: do it once, then stop. Don't turn R.E.S.T. into a new loop.

Tool 5: The Nightly Decompression Ritual

The “close the day” routine that protects your sleep. When to use it: most nights; always on high-threat days. Why it matters: your nervous system relaxes when the day feels closed. You'll choose one of three styles in Week 4: Planner, Reflective, Exhausted Human. The goal is not perfection. The goal is closure.

Tool 6: Scripts Library

Words you can borrow when you're activated. When you're anxious, your brain loses language. Scripts give you a ready-made sentence so you don't spiral. You'll use these throughout the 4 weeks — the full library is in Appendix G.

The “Minimum Effective Day” Plan

If you only have 5 minutes, do this: 1) Loop Log (3 minutes) 2) R.E.S.T. in 2 minutes on the biggest loop. That counts. You're still training the pattern.

If you have 15 minutes, do this: 1) Loop Log 2) Story Extraction or Evidence Bank 3) R.E.S.T. in 5 to close the day.

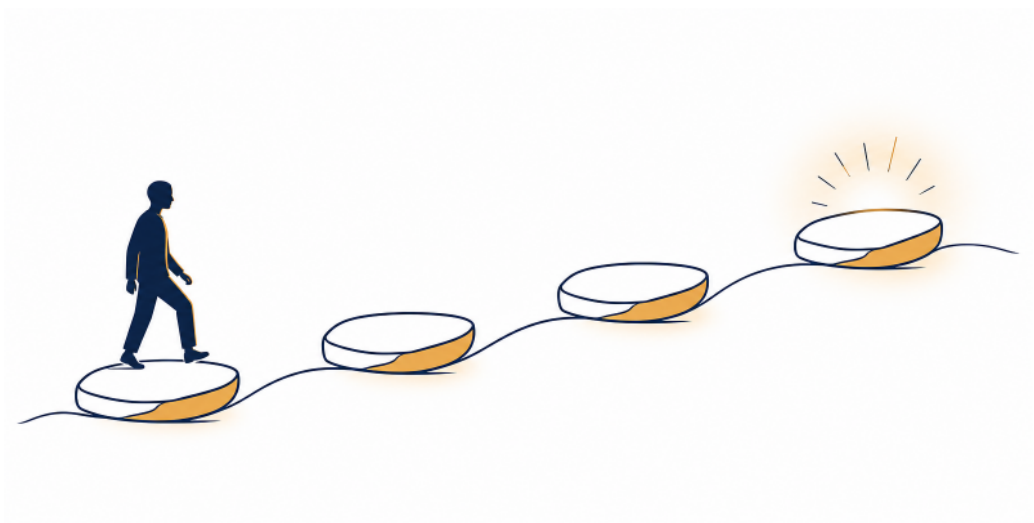
Bridge Into the Program

You now have the map (Part I), the method (Part II), and the tools.

You're ready for the program.

Week 1 starts now: Recognize. Your goal is not to stop overthinking. Your goal is to catch it earlier than you usually do.

PART III — The 4-Week Overthinking Detox Program



You don't need a silent brain. You need a reliable off-ramp. In the next four weeks, you'll train a new default response to work replays using the R.E.S.T. Method™.

Time commitment: 10–20 minutes/day (or less on busy weeks). Goal: fewer and shorter spirals — especially at night.

How This Program Works

Each week follows the same structure so you always know what to do next: Overview + Goal, Daily Plan (morning / during work / after work / before bed), Core Exercise (the week's main tool), Scripts (what to say to yourself when you spiral), Troubleshooting (common traps + fixes), Weekly Review (progress + pattern spotting).

You do not have to be perfect. You do have to keep coming back.

Choose Your Pace

Standard: 10–20 minutes/day. Busy Week: 5–10 minutes/day (Loop Log + one tool). Crisis Mode: 2–5 minutes/day (R.E.S.T. in 5 only). All three count. Consistency beats intensity.

If You Get Stuck at Night

Use the emergency tool immediately: R.E.S.T. in 5 minutes -> then stop -> then sleep. Don't negotiate with your brain for an hour. Use the process once.

Program-at-a-Glance

Week 1 — Recognize — Catch the loop earlier — Loop Log — Awareness + earlier “oh, I'm looping” Week 2 — Extract — Name the story behind the loop — Story Extraction Worksheet — Less fog + less “doom feeling” Week 3 — Scan — Stop your brain's bad-news filter — Evidence Bank — Less certainty of worst-case stories Week 4 — Transition — Close the day and protect sleep — Nightly Decompression + R.E.S.T. in 5 — Shorter spirals + faster shutdown

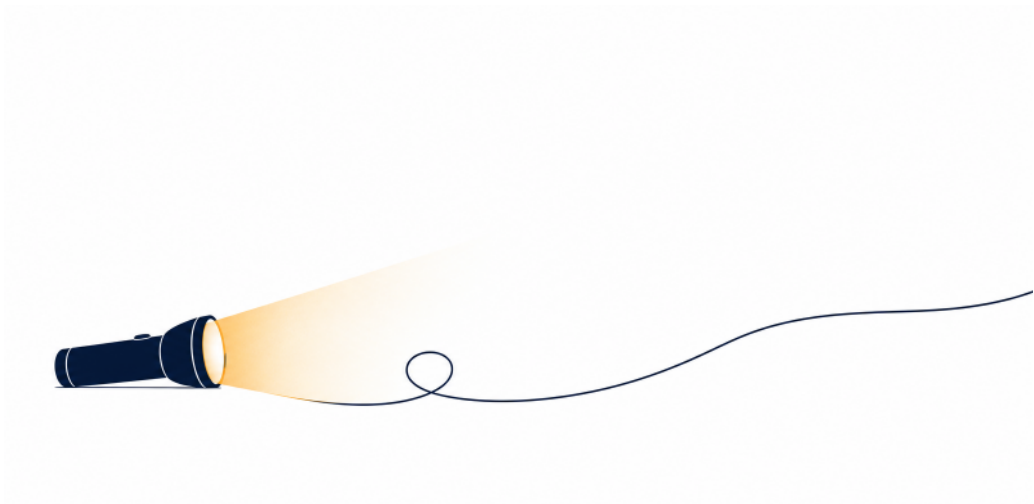
Your “Minimum Effective Day” (When Life Is Busy)

If you only have 5 minutes, do this: 1) Loop Log (3 minutes) 2) R.E.S.T. mini (2 minutes) on the biggest loop. That counts. You are still rewiring the pattern.

What Progress Looks Like (So You Don’t Quit Early)

Progress usually shows up as: spirals become shorter before they become rarer; intensity drops from 8/10 -> 6/10 before it drops to 3/10; you still have thoughts, but you stop getting trapped inside them.

Chapter 6 — Week 1: Recognize



Catch the Loop Earlier Than You Usually Do

Week 1 At a Glance

This week's goal: Catch the first 30–60 seconds of a work-replay loop—without fixing it yet.

What success looks like (realistic): you notice “I’m looping” at least once per day; you fill out the Loop Log on 5 days (not 7); your spirals may still happen—but you spot them earlier than you used to.

Core skill you’re training: Awareness before analysis. You’re building the habit of noticing the loop as it starts, not after it’s taken over your night.

Your Week 1 Focus

What You’re Learning to Notice (Early Signals)

Most spirals don’t start with panic. They start quietly. A loop usually begins with a tiny shift, showing up in one or more of these categories:

Thought signals — a sentence repeats in your head (“Why did I say that?”); you start rewriting the past (“I should have said...”); you start mind-reading (“They probably thought...”); you zoom in on a tiny detail and treat it like a verdict (a face, a pause, a word choice, an emoji).

Body signals — chest tightness, stomach drop, jaw clench, throat tightness, restless legs, shallow breathing, sudden heat in your face, “buzzing” energy like you need to act immediately.

Behavior signals — re-checking Slack/email/calendar repeatedly, rereading a message thread, replaying the meeting in your mind while doing something else, drafting messages you don’t send, doom-scrolling “career advice” to reduce uncertainty.

Emotional signals — embarrassment that won’t leave, anxiety that feels disproportionate to what happened, shame (“I’m so stupid”), dread (“tomorrow will be bad”), irritability

that appears out of nowhere.

This week, you're not trying to stop these signals. You're training yourself to notice them as the loop alarm.

Remember the reflection-vs-rumination test from Chapter 3: if you're not learning anything new and it's not leading to a clear next step, it's rumination — a signal to use a tool, not think harder.

The Week 1 Micro-Habit: Label the Loop

When you catch yourself replaying, say one short sentence, out loud or silently: "I'm replaying that meeting." "Loop started." "Mind-reading is happening." "This is rumination."

This is not a cheesy mindset trick. It's a nervous-system skill. It creates a tiny psychological distance: "I am noticing a loop" instead of "This loop is reality." That distance is the beginning of control.

Your Trigger Shortlist: The "Red Flags" That Predict Tonight's Replay

One of the most helpful shifts you can make in your work life is this: stop treating loops as random. Most of them are predictable.

Common Work "Red Flags" (Choose Your Usual Suspects)

Meeting triggers — silence after you speak, being interrupted or talked over, noticing someone's neutral face, saying something and immediately regretting it, leaving the meeting feeling "off" but not sure why.

Messaging triggers — "Can we talk tomorrow?", "Ok.,"/"Noted.,"/"Sure.," a thumbs-up with no text, delayed replies, messages that feel colder than usual, being left on read.

Manager triggers — tone shift, less warmth than normal, vague feedback, "Let's revisit this later," "We need to improve X" without specifics.

Identity triggers — presenting to senior people, being compared to a stronger teammate, making a mistake (or thinking you did), feeling behind or slow, asking a question and feeling "junior."

How to Build Your Trigger Shortlist This Week

Every day, when you fill your Loop Log, answer: "What was the trigger?" At the end of the week, circle the top 3 that show up most often. Those three triggers become your "warning system." When you know your triggers, you stop being surprised by your spirals. And when you stop being surprised, you stop being as scared of them.

Core Tool: The Loop Log

Your 3-Minute Daily Pattern Detector

The Loop Log is the simplest tool in this program—and one of the most powerful. Not because it "fixes" anything instantly, but because it does something your anxious brain hates: it makes the spiral observable.

When you write one loop down per day, you start seeing: what triggers you most, what stories repeat, what times of day you're most vulnerable, what patterns are just your brain

doing its thing. That's how you stop feeling like the loop is "you."

Rules for Using the Loop Log

1. One entry per day (not five)
2. One loop per entry (pick the loudest)
3. Three minutes is enough
4. No solving — this is data collection, not a trial

If you have multiple loops in a day, choose the one that: kept returning, felt most intense, affected your sleep or mood the most.

Loop Log Template — Week 1 Version

LOOP LOG — WEEK 1 (RECOGNIZE) Date: Time you're logging: 1. What happened? (facts only) — write 1–3 sentences, like a camera recorded it. 2. When did the loop start? — right away / later / commute / bedtime / 3 A.M. wake-up 3. What did I keep replaying? — a phrase, facial expression, silence, tone, message, moment. 4. What story did my brain start telling? (no analysis, just capture) — "This means I'm..." / "They think..." / "This will lead to..." 5. Body signal: — what did you feel physically? 6. Loop intensity (0–10): 7. How long did I stay in it (approx.)? 8. Label I can use next time (one sentence): — examples: "Loop started." "Mind-reading." "Rumination."

That's the whole log.

Loop Log Examples

Example 1 — Meeting Silence 1) What happened? In the team meeting, I suggested a small change to our process. After I spoke, there was a short silence and then my manager moved on. 2) When did the loop start? About 10 minutes later. 3) What did I keep replaying? The silence. My manager's neutral face. 4) What story did my brain start telling? "I sounded stupid." "They regret hiring me." "I shouldn't speak up." 5) Body signal: Stomach drop, tight shoulders. 6) Intensity: 7/10 7) Duration: On and off for 2 hours 8) Label: "I'm replaying that silence."

Example 2 — The Slack Thumbs-Up 1) What happened? I sent a message asking a senior teammate if my approach made sense. They replied with a thumbs-up and nothing else. 2) When did the loop start? Immediately. 3) What did I keep replaying? The emoji. The lack of words. 4) What story did my brain start telling? "They think my question is dumb." "They're annoyed with me." "I'm not independent enough." 5) Body signal: Tight chest, restlessness. 6) Intensity: 6/10 7) Duration: ~45 minutes 8) Label: "Mind-reading Slack."

Example 3 — Manager Tone Shift 1) What happened? In my 1:1, I said a task was delayed. My manager asked, "What blocked you?" in a flat tone and wrote something down. 2) When did the loop start? That evening. 3) What did I keep replaying? The flat tone. The note-taking. 4) What story did my brain start telling? "They're disappointed." "I'm unreliable." "This will come up in my review." 5) Body signal: Jaw tension, headache. 6) Intensity: 8/10 7) Duration: 90 minutes + woke up once thinking about it 8) Label: "Loop about tone—no certainty."

The Most Important Outcome of the Loop Log

After 5–7 days, you’ll start seeing patterns like: “Most of my loops are triggered by silence.” “My spirals usually start after 5 p.m.” “My brain’s favorite story is ‘I’m incompetent.’” “Ambiguous messages are gasoline for me.” That awareness is the foundation for Week 2.

Week 1 Daily Plan

Standard Plan (10–15 minutes/day)

Morning (1 minute) — Write or say: “Today I’m not trying to stop overthinking. I’m trying to notice it once.”

During work (micro-noticing, 10 seconds each time) — When you catch replay, mind-reading, or body alarm: “Loop started.” “I’ll log this later.” (Optional) jot a 3-word note: “Standup silence” / “Slack thumbs-up” / “Manager tone”.

After work (3 minutes) — Fill out one Loop Log entry.

Before bed (2–3 minutes) — Ask: “Did I notice a loop earlier than I usually do?” “What was today’s main trigger?” Then stop. No deep thinking session.

Busy Week Plan (5–8 minutes) — 1) Loop Log (3 minutes) 2) One-sentence label (1 minute): “My brain’s main loop today is ____.” 3) Close the book (yes, seriously). Busy-week consistency beats perfect weeks.

Crisis Mode (2–5 minutes) — Do R.E.S.T. in 5 minutes once at night (or even the 2-minute version). Skip everything else. That still counts.

Week 1 Checklist (Daily)

- I intended to notice a loop once today
- I labeled at least one loop (“Loop started”)
- I filled out one Loop Log entry
- I stopped after logging (didn’t turn it into an hour of analysis)

3–4 checks = you’re on track.

What to Do When You Catch a Loop Midday

The 20-Second Sequence: 1) Name it: “Loop started.” 2) Defer it: “I’ll write it later.” 3) Return: “Back to the next step in front of me.” That’s the whole move.

Week 1 Troubleshooting

“I still spiraled for hours.” This is the most common Week 1 complaint—and it’s not a sign the method isn’t working. Week 1 is not designed to stop spirals yet. It’s designed to do something simpler and more important: turn the light on. For years, spirals have happened in the dark—you only noticed them after they’d already taken over. Now you’re learning to notice earlier, and earlier noticing is a real skill. If you spiral for a long time anyway, do this: 1) Name it: “I’m in a loop.” 2) Stop trying to solve it. 3) Capture it briefly (Loop Log or even 2 lines in your phone). 4) Return to the next action (shower, dinner, bed). That’s a win. Even if the spiral lasted an hour, you recognized it without merging with it, saw the trigger, saw the story, and built a record.

“I didn’t notice the loop until late at night.” That’s normal. Log it anyway. Earlier noticing comes with repetition. A helpful prompt: “When did I feel the first body signal today?” That’s often earlier than the thought spiral.

“Logging makes me feel worse.” Sometimes attention feels like intensity. You are not creating the anxiety—you’re finally observing it. If logging feels heavy: keep entries shorter, skip full sentences, use keywords only, stop at 3 minutes even if it feels unfinished. You’re training awareness, not doing therapy homework.

“What if my job is genuinely high-stakes?” Then Week 1 matters even more. High stakes don’t require more rumination. They require clearer action, a calmer nervous system, better sleep. We’re not dismissing real consequences. We’re removing unnecessary suffering.

End-of-Week 1 Review (5 Minutes, Once)

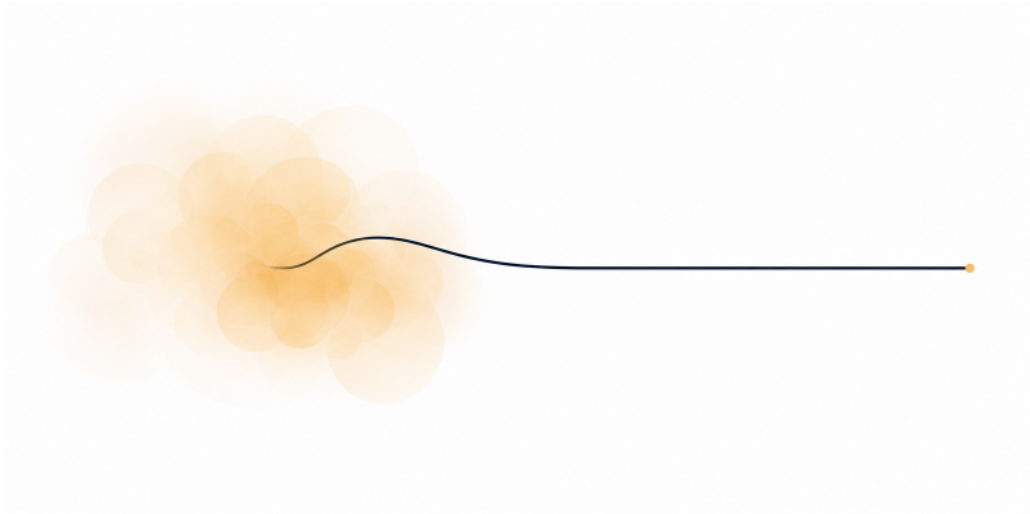
At the end of the week, skim your Loop Logs and answer: 1) My top 3 triggers were: ____ / ____ / ____ 2) The most common loop topic was: ____ 3) The earliest I noticed a loop this week was: ____ 4) One small win I’m counting: ____

Then write this sentence: “My brain’s favorite work story this week was: ____.” That sentence becomes your starting point for Week 2.

What Comes Next

Week 2 — Extract. In Week 2, you’ll learn to pull the story out of the fog: what happened (fact), what your brain says it means (story), what future it’s afraid of (threat). When the story becomes clear, it becomes workable. Turn the page when you’re ready.

Chapter 7 — Week 2: Extract



Extract the Story Your Brain Is Telling

Turn Anxiety Fog into a Clear Storyline You Can Work With

Week 1 taught you to catch the loop. Week 2 is where you stop getting hypnotized by it.

Because most work overthinking isn't really about the meeting, the message, or the awkward moment. It's about the meaning your brain assigns to it. And when the meaning stays vague, your brain keeps replaying—because it can't "solve" what it can't define.

This week, you're going to do one powerful thing: pull the story out of the fog.

Not to argue with it. Not to force yourself to believe the opposite. Just to see it clearly.

Clarity is the first real off-ramp.

What Week 2 Is (and Is Not)

Week 2 is: turning "something feels wrong" into a specific story; separating Event -> Meaning -> Threat; naming your brain's favorite work narratives; using one tool daily: the Story Extraction Worksheet.

Week 2 is not: proving the story is false; "positive thinking"; pretending you don't care; a therapy session where you analyze your entire childhood.

This is practical, short, and designed for real workdays.

Your Week 2 Finish Line

By the end of this week, success looks like: you completed the Story Extraction Worksheet on 5 days (not 7); you can name your top 1–2 repeating stories (e.g. "incompetence," "rejection," "exposure"); your loops feel less like endless danger and more like a script you can see; when you start spiraling, you catch yourself saying: "This is the story my brain is telling." You don't need the story to feel "untrue" yet. You just need it to become visible.

Why "Extract" Works When Your Brain Won't Shut Up

Your brain hates uncertainty. Especially at work, where uncertainty can feel like social danger. So it does what brains do: it picks an interpretation, it escalates it into a threat, it replays the event until it feels “resolved.” The problem is, the “resolution” your brain wants is often impossible: you can’t know exactly what they thought; you can’t time-travel and redo the sentence; you can’t force certainty out of a Slack emoji. So replay becomes a loop. Extract breaks the loop by turning “doom fog” into a clear hypothesis. That’s the key mindset for this week: your story is not a fact. It’s a hypothesis your brain generated under stress. And hypotheses can be tested and updated (Week 3). But first, you need to write the hypothesis down.

The Story Formula: Event → Meaning → Threat

This is the backbone of Week 2. Most workplace spirals follow this exact structure (see Figure 7.1):

Figure 7.1 — Event → Meaning → Threat

Event (Camera)	Meaning (Narrator)	Threat (Trailer)
What happened Facts only	What your brain says it means	What your brain predicts comes next
Event → Meaning → Threat		

- 1) Event — What happened. Facts only. Like a camera recorded it.
- 2) Meaning — What your brain says it means. About you, about them, about your status.
- 3) Threat — What your brain predicts will happen next. The scary future outcome.

If you remember nothing else this week, remember this: Event is what happened. Meaning is what your brain decided it means. Threat is what your brain fears comes next.

A simple memory trick: Camera (Event), Narrator (Meaning), Trailer (Threat).

Example: A Slack Message That Hijacks Your Night

Event: Your manager writes: “Can we talk tomorrow morning?” Meaning: “I did something wrong.” Threat: “I’m in trouble / I’ll get criticized / I might get fired.” Nothing about the event guarantees that meaning or threat. But your brain treats them like certainty. That’s why you extract.

Common Work Stories: The Four Narratives Your Brain Loves Most

Most people don’t have 50 different work anxieties. They have 2–3 repeating stories wearing different outfits.

- 1) The Incompetence Story — Headline: “I’m not good enough.” Common thoughts: “I sounded stupid.” “I’m behind everyone else.” “They’re realizing I can’t do this.” Common triggers: silence after you speak, being interrupted, a question you couldn’t answer immediately, vague feedback like “let’s improve this,” watching someone more senior speak smoothly. What this story is really about: status, competence, belonging.

- 2) The Rejection Story — Headline: “They don’t like me / I’m annoying / I’m a burden.” Common thoughts: “They’re tired of me.” “I’m asking too many questions.” “I’m not included because they don’t want me.” Common triggers: short replies (“ok,” “noted,” a lone thumbs-up), being left on read, not getting invited to something, a teammate sounding less warm than usual, someone being busy but your brain calling it “personal.” What this story is really about: acceptance, social safety, fear of being a problem.
- 3) The Exposure Story — Headline: “I’m going to be found out.” Common thoughts: “I don’t really belong here.” “I got lucky.” “Soon they’ll see I’m not as capable as they think.” Common triggers: new role/new team, presentations to senior stakeholders, high-visibility work, comparing yourself to confident coworkers, receiving praise (yes, praise can trigger exposure fear). What this story is really about: imposter fear, identity, fear of public failure.
- 4) The Safety Story — Headline: “I’m in trouble / my job isn’t safe.” Common thoughts: “This will come up in my review.” “I’m going to get sidelined.” “I might get fired.” Common triggers: manager’s tone shift + note-taking, mistakes involving clients, leadership changes or restructuring rumors, missed deadlines, being asked “can we talk?” with no context. What this story is really about: security, stability, fear of consequences.

Micro-Habit This Week: Name the Story

When you notice a loop, try labeling the story by category: “This is the incompetence story.” “This is the rejection story.” “This is the exposure story.” “This is the safety story.” This is not cheesy. It’s pattern recognition. It helps your brain stop treating the story as a unique emergency and start treating it as a familiar script.

Core Tool: The Story Extraction Worksheet

This is the main work of Week 2. You will do one worksheet per day, on one loop (the loudest one). The goal is not to solve everything. The goal is to turn the loop into a clear storyline.

The Rules (So This Doesn’t Become Another Spiral)

1. One loop per day. Pick the loudest.
2. Facts first. If you skip facts, you’ll write fiction.
3. Keep it short. 10–15 minutes max.
4. No verdicts tonight. You’re extracting, not proving.

Story Extraction Worksheet Template

STORY EXTRACTION — WEEK 2 (EXTRACT) Date: Loop topic (1 line): (example: “silence after I spoke” / “manager’s short reply” / “my mistake on the deck”)

- 1) Event: What happened? (facts only) — write like a camera. What was said/done? Where/when did it happen? What did you observe (tone, words, actions)? Event (facts):
- 2) Meaning: What is my brain saying it means? — “This means I’m ____.” “This means they think ____.” Meaning (story):

- 3) Threat: What is my brain afraid will happen next? — “And then I fear ____.”
“Worst-case outcome: ____.” Threat (future):
- 4) Believability + intensity (quick ratings) — How believable does this story feel (0–10)? ____ How intense is the feeling in my body (0–10)? ____
- 5) Body signal (1 phrase) — example: “tight chest” / “stomach drop” / “jaw clench”
Body: ____
- 6) What would I tell a friend? — one sentence, same situation, friend you care about
Friend sentence:
- 7) Tiny next step (optional, if needed) — if the story is true, what is one small action for tomorrow? Tiny action:

Stop here. Close the page. That counts.

The 90-Second Version (For Tired Days)

When you're low-energy, use this mini version: 1) Event (facts): ____ 2) Story: “This means I'm ____.” 3) Threat: “And then I fear ____.” 4) Believability (0–10): ____ Stop there.

Examples: Three Real Work Scenarios (Filled In)

Example 1: Meeting Silence (Incompetence Story) Loop topic: Silence after I suggested an idea in the meeting. 1) Event (facts): In the team meeting, I suggested changing the timeline for a deliverable. After I spoke, there was a brief silence. My manager said, “Okay,” and moved on to the next agenda item. 2) Meaning (story): “This means I sounded dumb.” “This means they think I don't understand the project.” 3) Threat (future): “And then I fear they'll stop trusting me.” “Worst-case: I'll be seen as weak and get sidelined.” 4) Believability: 7/10 Intensity: 6/10 5) Body: stomach drop + hot face 6) Friend sentence: “Silence isn't proof. People pause for a million reasons. One moment doesn't define your competence.” 7) Tiny action: Tomorrow, I'll ask one clarifying question about the timeline so I'm not guessing.

Example 2: Slack Thumbs-Up (Rejection Story) Loop topic: Teammate replied with a thumbs-up only. 1) Event (facts): I messaged a senior teammate asking if my approach looked right. They replied with a thumbs-up emoji and no text. 2) Meaning (story): “This means my question was annoying.” “This means they think I'm needy.” 3) Threat (future): “And then I fear they'll stop wanting to work with me.” “Worst-case: they'll talk about me as a burden.” 4) Believability: 6/10 Intensity: 5/10 5) Body: tight chest 6) Friend sentence: “A thumbs-up usually means ‘yes.’ Your brain is doing the mind-reading thing.” 7) Tiny action: No action needed tonight.

Example 3: Manager Tone Shift (Safety Story) Loop topic: Manager asked about a delay in a flat tone. 1) Event (facts): In my 1:1, I said a deliverable was delayed by a day. My manager asked, “What blocked you?” in a flat tone and wrote something down. 2) Meaning (story): “This means they're disappointed in me.” “This means they're tracking my mistakes.” 3) Threat (future): “And then I fear this will show up in my review.” “Worst-case: I'm seen as unreliable and my job isn't safe.” 4) Believability: 8/10 Intensity: 7/10 5) Body: jaw tension + headache 6) Friend sentence: “They asked a normal management question. Even if they're concerned, you can respond with facts and a plan.” 7) Tiny action: Tomorrow, I'll send a short update with the new timeline and what I changed to prevent it repeating.

The 5 Questions That Interrupt Catastrophizing

Use one. Not all. When you're spiraling, your brain wants you to keep thinking. That's rarely the solution. Instead, use one of these questions to interrupt the runaway story — pick the one that feels most natural.

- 1) "What are the camera facts only?" Write two sentences max: "What actually happened, observable?"
- 2) "What am I assuming about what they think?" Name the assumption clearly: "I'm assuming they think I'm incompetent / annoying / not trusted."
- 3) "What is the threat my brain is predicting?" Complete: "And then I fear ____." This is the fastest way to move from fog to storyline.
- 4) "Is there a tiny action that would make tomorrow easier?" Not a life plan. One small action: clarify, follow up, fix, ask for feedback, prepare.
- 5) "What would I tell a friend if they were in my exact situation?" This question interrupts self-attack. You don't have to fully believe the friend sentence. Just write it.

A Simple Rule for Nighttime Loops

If you're doing this at night: Extract the story -> choose one tiny action (or "no action") -> stop. No long analysis sessions in bed. Week 4 will give you closure tools. For now, your job is extraction.

Week 2 Daily Plan

Standard Plan (10–20 minutes/day)

Morning (1 minute) — Write or say: "Today I'm extracting one story, not fixing everything."

During work (10 seconds when the loop starts) — When you feel a loop starting: 1) Label: "Loop started." 2) Bookmark: "Story here." 3) Optional 3-word note: "Slack thumbs-up" / "meeting silence" / "manager tone". Do not analyze during work. Just capture.

After work (10–15 minutes) — 1) Open your Loop Log (from Week 1) 2) Pick one loop (the loudest) 3) Complete one Story Extraction Worksheet.

Before bed (2–3 minutes) — Read your extracted story headline once: "My brain's story today was: ____." Then stop. No extra analysis session. If you're activated, do R.E.S.T. in 5 once—then bed.

Busy Week Plan (5–10 minutes) — Keep the Loop Log short (1–2 minutes). Do Story Extraction every other day (or only 3 times this week). Busy-week rule: one clear story is better than five rushed ones.

Crisis Mode (2–5 minutes) — Do R.E.S.T. in 5 minutes once at night. Optional: write only the story headline: "The story is: ____." That counts.

The Story Extraction Worksheet (Mini Version for Tired Days)

When you're low-energy, use this 90-second version: 1) Event (facts): ____ 2) Story: "This means I'm ____." 3) Threat: "And then I fear ____." 4) Believability (0–10): _____. Stop there.

Week 2 Checklist (Daily)

- I chose one loop to work on
- I wrote the camera facts (Event)
- I wrote the story (Meaning)
- I named the threat (feared outcome)
- I rated believability (0–10)
- I stopped after 10–15 minutes

3–4 checks = solid progress. 5–6 checks = you're fully doing Week 2.

What to Do When You Catch a Loop Midday

The 20-Second Protocol: 1) Name it: "Loop started." 2) Tag it: "Story here." 3) Return: "Back to the next task." That's enough. You'll extract later.

Week 2 Troubleshooting

"I can't put the story into words." Write a headline only: "Incompetence story." "Rejection story." "Safety story." Or write the feeling: "tight chest + 'I'm in trouble' vibe." That counts. Language gets easier with repetition.

"I wrote too much and got more anxious." Your brain will try to turn the worksheet into a trial. Don't allow it. Short is powerful. Cap it at 10–15 minutes.

"My story feels true because I'm new / I actually am behind." Then make the worksheet practical: What's the real skill gap (if any)? What's one small step to reduce it? What feedback or clarification would help? Being new doesn't mean you're doomed. It means you're learning. And learning is allowed to feel messy.

"I keep looping on the same story every day." Perfect. That means you found your main pattern. Write the repeating headline at the top of your page: "This is the ____ story again." Next week you will start collecting evidence that challenges it.

"When the story feels true." Sometimes the story is obviously exaggerated. But sometimes it feels... real. Maybe you actually made a mistake. Maybe feedback really was critical. Maybe the deadline really was missed. Week 2 still works here—but you need one extra skill: separate real mistakes from imagined disaster. Because your anxious brain loves to take a real mistake and attach a catastrophic future to it.

Step 1: Split Reality From Catastrophe. Write two lines: What I know (facts): "I sent the wrong file." "The client saw a version with an error." "My manager asked me to fix it." What my brain is adding (catastrophe): "They'll never trust me again." "I've ruined my reputation." "This will get me fired." This split is powerful because it stops the brain from treating everything as one giant emergency.

Step 2: Use the 10-Minute Repair Rule. If there is a real mistake, your brain will try to repair it by thinking for 2 hours. That rarely helps. Instead, give your brain a container: 10 minutes to make a repair plan. Then stop. A repair plan has only three parts: 1) Correct: What is the fix? 2) Communicate: Who needs to know, and what's the simplest message? 3) Prevent: What small change reduces repeat risk? That's it. Then Transition (close the day): "I have a plan. Tomorrow-me will execute it. Tonight I rest."

Example: Real Mistake, Handled Cleanly Event (facts): I attached the wrong version of the deck. Meaning (story): "I'm careless and incompetent." Threat: "I'll lose trust; my

manager will regret hiring me.” Reality/Catastrophe split: Facts: wrong file sent; fix is to resend correct deck. Catastrophe: “I’m doomed.” 10-minute repair plan: Correct: resend updated file + highlight change. Communicate: “Sorry—attached correct version. The updated numbers are on slide 7.” Prevent: rename files + final check step before send. Now stop. That is competence. That is professional behavior. Your brain may still feel embarrassed. That’s human. But you don’t need a 2-hour punishment spiral.

Step 3: When You Truly Don’t Know. A lot of work overthinking is ambiguity: you don’t know what they meant, you don’t know what they thought, you don’t know what they said after the meeting. If you don’t know, treat your story as a hypothesis—not a verdict. Write: “I don’t have enough data to conclude this. I’m noticing my brain trying to fill the gap.” This sets you up perfectly for Week 3 (Scan), where you build an Evidence Bank and stop your brain from ignoring neutral/positive data.

End of Week 2 Review (5 Minutes, Once)

On Day 7 (or your last day of Week 2): 1) Skim your worksheets. 2) Circle the top 2 story themes. 3) Write this sentence: “My brain’s favorite work story is: ____.” That becomes your anchor for Week 3 (Scan).

What Comes Next

Week 2 taught you to name the story. Week 3 fixes the input your brain uses to write it in the first place. Turn the page when you’re ready.

Chapter 8 — Week 3: Scan the Evidence



Build a More Accurate Reality

Week 1 taught you to catch the loop. Week 2 taught you to name the story.

Now we fix the input.

Because here's the problem: even after you extract a clear story, your brain is still working from a rigged dataset. It remembers the silence. It deletes the "thanks for that." It stores the flat tone in your manager's voice and throws away the six times they trusted you with something hard.

You don't have an accuracy problem because you're pessimistic. You have an accuracy problem because your brain's filing system is broken by design.

This week, you fix the filing system.

Not by forcing positivity. Not by telling yourself lies to feel better. By collecting the evidence your brain keeps skipping.

What Week 3 Is (and Is Not)

Week 3 is: understanding why your brain deletes good data and keeps bad data; using one tool daily: the Evidence Bank; building a body of proof that outweighs one bad moment.

Week 3 is not: "just think positive"; pretending problems don't exist; rewriting history to make everything fine.

This is a fair trial. Not a rigged one in either direction.

Your Week 3 Finish Line

By the end of this week, success looks like: you've made 5 Evidence Bank entries (not 7); you can name at least 3 pieces of evidence that contradict your most common story; when a loop starts, part of you now says: "Wait — I have evidence against this."; your worst stories still show up, but they don't walk in unopposed anymore.

Your Brain's Bad-News Filter at Work

Here's the unfair math your brain runs, every day, without asking your permission: one negative cue outweighs ten normal cues; one awkward pause becomes a "receipt"; ten fine, unremarkable interactions become "nothing," and get erased by end of day.

This isn't a personality flaw. It's confirmation bias, and it runs hardest exactly where you need it least: at work, under uncertainty, when your identity feels tied to the outcome.

Your brain isn't lying to you on purpose. It's running a search that was only ever told to look for danger. It finds danger. It stops looking for anything else.

That's why you can remember the ten seconds of silence after your comment in a meeting — and forget that you were asked for your opinion three separate times that same week.

Why "Positive Thinking" Doesn't Fix This

Most advice here tells you to "focus on the positive." That fails for a specific reason: your brain doesn't trust cheerleading. It trusts evidence.

Telling yourself "everything is fine" when you don't believe it is just another kind of noise — and your nervous system tunes it out as fast as it tunes out a stranger's compliment.

The Evidence Bank works differently. It doesn't ask you to feel good. It asks you to look at what's actually there and write it down before your brain deletes it. That's the whole mechanism: you're not creating new facts. You're stopping your brain from throwing the real ones away.

Tool: The Evidence Bank

Train Your Brain to Store the Full Reality

When to use it: nightly, or any time something contradicts your worst story. Why it matters: your brain remembers criticism and deletes neutral or positive data — this rebuilds the missing half.

Three types of evidence: Wins — clear positives ("Manager said the client loved the draft"). Neutrals — nothing bad happened, which is more powerful than it sounds ("Sent the follow-up, got a normal reply, no drama"). Contradictions — evidence that directly clashes with the negative story ("Story says 'they don't trust me.' Fact: they just asked for my input first.").

Most people skip neutrals. Don't. Neutrals are the bulk of your actual work life, and your brain deletes almost all of them by default. Writing them down is how you catch your brain in the act.

The Evidence Bank Walkthrough

Here's a full entry, start to finish, using a realistic trigger.

The trigger: Your manager gives you feedback on a deck — "Let's simplify slide 4" — and says nothing else. Story (from Week 2): "They think my work isn't good enough. They're losing confidence in me."

Now you Scan.

Step 1 — Write the story you're testing (one line): "They think my work isn't good enough."

Step 2 — List 1–3 pieces of evidence that don’t fully support it: “They approved slides 1, 2, 3, and 5 without a single comment.” “Two weeks ago, they asked me to lead the client call — not something you hand to someone you don’t trust.” “‘Simplify slide 4’ is one line of feedback on one slide out of six.”

Step 3 — Write a balanced possibility (not forced positivity): “It’s possible this is normal editing feedback, not a verdict on my competence.”

Step 4 — Rate how the story feels now (0–10): Before: 7/10 believable. After: 3/10 believable.

That drop is the entire point of Week 3. You didn’t argue yourself out of the feeling. You just made your brain look at the rest of the file.

 Common Mistake: Waiting to “Feel Convinced”

You don’t need to fully believe the balanced possibility tonight. You need it written down, so it exists as a competing file the next time the story tries to run unopposed. Belief comes later, after repetition. Evidence comes first.

The Evidence Bank Template

EVIDENCE BANK — WEEK 3 (SCAN) Date: Story I’m testing (1 line): 1) Wins (clear positives this week): - ____ - ____ 2) Neutrals (nothing bad happened — write at least one): - ____ - ____ 3) Contradictions (facts that clash with the worst story): - ____ - ____ 4) Balanced possibility: “It’s possible that ____.” 5) Believability before (0–10): ____ Believability after (0–10): ____

Stop here. That’s the whole entry.

Example Entries

Example 1 — The Silent Manager Story: “They don’t respect my work.” Wins: “Teammate asked for my input on the roadmap before anyone else’s.” Neutrals: “Manager gave zero feedback on my update — that’s normal for a routine week, not a signal.” Contradictions: “They put me on the client call last week. People don’t hand hard things to someone they don’t trust.” Balanced possibility: “It’s possible silence just means ‘no news,’ not ‘disapproval.’” Believability: 7/10 -> 3/10

Example 2 — The Vague Slack Reply Story: “They think I’m annoying for asking.” Wins: “Two other people asked similar questions this week and got the same short replies.” Neutrals: “They’re historically a short-reply person, even with people they clearly like.” Contradictions: “They followed up an hour later with an actual answer — not something you do for someone you’re annoyed with.” Balanced possibility: “It’s possible their reply style has nothing to do with me at all.” Believability: 6/10 -> 2/10

Example 3 — The Real Mistake Story: “This one mistake proves I’m not cut out for this.” Wins: “Caught and fixed the error myself before anyone else saw it.” Neutrals: “Nobody outside the team ever knew it happened.” Contradictions: “I’ve delivered six error-free projects this quarter. This is one out of many, not a pattern.” Balanced possibility: “It’s possible one mistake is data, not a verdict.” Believability: 8/10 -> 4/10

Handling Ambiguity: When You’ll Never Know What They Thought

Some loops don’t resolve because you’re missing information you’ll never get. You won’t always know what your manager meant. You won’t always get to ask.

This week, when that happens, don't leave the story unopposed just because you can't confirm it. Write: "I don't have enough data to know what they meant. I'm choosing not to fill that gap with the worst option available." That's not avoidance. That's an accurate account of what you actually know.

The "I'll Never Know" Loop. If your brain keeps circling back to something you genuinely cannot verify, that's a signal — not that you need more thinking, but that you need to close the file. Week 4 gives you the tool for that. This week, your job is simpler: notice when a loop is unresolvable, and stop feeding it more analysis.

Week 3 Daily Plan

Standard Plan (10–15 minutes/day)

Morning (1 minute) — Write or say: "Today I'm collecting evidence, not fixing my brain."

During work (10 seconds, as it happens) — When something good, neutral, or contradicting happens — even something tiny — jot 2–3 words: "client said thanks" / "no drama on the email" / "asked my opinion first."

After work (5–10 minutes) — Fill out one Evidence Bank entry using the loudest story from today.

Before bed (2 minutes) — Read your balanced possibility once. Then stop.

Busy Week Plan (5–8 minutes/day) — Jot 1–2 evidence notes during the day (keywords only). Do the Evidence Bank in shorthand: story, one win, one neutral, one contradiction. Skip the full write-up.

Crisis Mode (2–5 minutes/day) — Do R.E.S.T. in 5 Minutes once at night. Optional: write one contradiction only. That still counts.

Week 3 Checklist (daily)

- I noticed at least one piece of evidence today
- I wrote at least one neutral (not just wins)
- I completed one Evidence Bank entry
- I stopped after the entry — no extra "proving" session

3–4 checks = solid progress. 5 = you're fully doing Week 3.

Week 3 Troubleshooting

"I can't think of any evidence." Start smaller. "Nobody yelled at me" is a neutral. "I finished the task" is a win. You're not looking for glowing praise — you're looking for anything your brain would normally throw away.

"The evidence doesn't feel like it matters." That feeling is the bias talking. Evidence doesn't have to feel as loud as the fear to be real. Write it down anyway. Repetition is what gives it weight over time.

"I found evidence, but I still believe the bad story." That's expected in Week 3. You're not aiming for zero belief in the worst story — you're aiming for a lower number, and a habit of looking. Weeks of small drops compound.

"What if the evidence for the bad story is actually stronger?" Then you may be looking at a real problem, not a distorted one. Go back to Week 2's reality/catastrophe split: separate

the real issue from the imagined pile-on, and make a small repair plan instead of running Week 3 on a fact you already know.

End-of-Week 3 Review

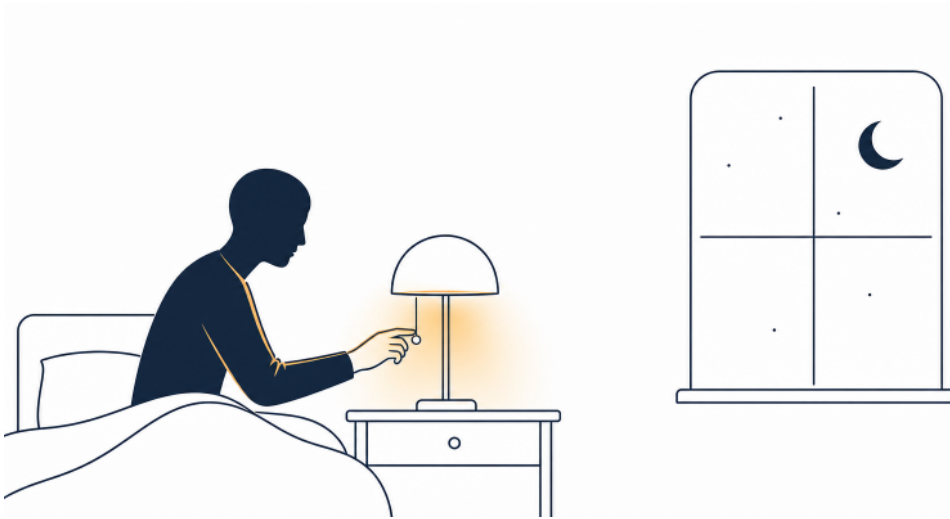
At the end of the week, answer: 1. My top story this week was: ____ 2. The strongest piece of evidence against it was: ____ 3. My believability rating dropped from ____ to ____ 4. One thing I'm noticing my brain deletes by default: ____

Then finish this sentence: "The evidence I keep forgetting is: ____." That sentence is your bridge into Week 4 — where the goal shifts from finding the right story to closing the day, whether or not the story is fully resolved.

What Comes Next

Week 4 — Transition. In Week 4, you stop needing a perfect answer before you can sleep. You'll build a Nightly Decompression Ritual in one of three styles (Planner / Reflective / Exhausted Human), the full R.E.S.T. in 5 Minutes routine, integrated as your nightly and 3 A.M. close, and a plan for high-threat weeks — reviews, presentations, big changes. You don't need zero thoughts to sleep. You need closure. Turn the page when you're ready.

Chapter 9 — Week 4: Transition Out of Work Mode



Close the Day and Protect Your Sleep

You’ve recognized the loop. You’ve extracted the story. You’ve scanned for evidence.

Now you learn the piece that actually gets you to sleep: closure.

Not silence. Not a blank mind. Not “solving” everything before your head hits the pillow.

Closure.

You Don’t Need Zero Thoughts to Sleep

Here’s the belief that quietly wrecks most people’s nights: the idea that a good night’s sleep requires a quiet mind. It doesn’t.

Plenty of people fall asleep with unfinished thoughts drifting around. What keeps you up isn’t the presence of thoughts. It’s the presence of an open loop your brain thinks it still needs to solve.

Mental noise: “I wonder how that project will go” — passes through, doesn’t grip. Active rumination: “I need to figure out exactly what they meant right now, tonight, before I can rest” — grips, replays, escalates.

Week 4 doesn’t aim for a silent brain. It aims to convince your nervous system that tonight’s file is closed — even if the underlying question isn’t fully answered yet. That’s the whole shift: from resolution to closure.

What Week 4 Is (and Is Not)

Week 4 is: building a real Nightly Decompression Ritual you’ll actually use; using R.E.S.T. in 5 Minutes as your closing move, not just an emergency tool; learning to close the day on purpose, especially before high-threat events.

Week 4 is not: forcing yourself to stop caring; achieving total calm every night; a guarantee you’ll never spiral again.

Some nights will still be hard. The difference is you'll have a real off-ramp instead of nothing.

Your Week 4 Finish Line

By the end of this week, success looks like: you have one Nightly Decompression Ritual you've actually tried at least 4 nights; you can run R.E.S.T. in 5 Minutes from memory, without looking at the sheet; your spirals are shorter, even on nights they still happen; you have a specific plan for your next high-threat week, before it arrives.

Designing Your Nightly Decompression Ritual

The "Close the Day" Routine That Protects Your Sleep

A ritual works because it gives your nervous system a repeatable signal: this is what "done" looks like. Done doesn't need to mean resolved. It needs to mean recognizable.

Pick one of these three styles. You can switch later, but commit to one for this week.

Style 1 — The Planner. For people who feel calmer with a concrete plan. 1) Write tomorrow's top 3 tasks (2 minutes) 2) Run R.E.S.T. in 5 on today's loudest loop (5 minutes) 3) One closing line: "The plan is written. Tonight I rest."

Style 2 — The Reflective. For people who process better through a few honest lines than a task list. 1) Write 2–3 lines: what went okay today, what didn't, what you're taking forward (3 minutes) 2) Run R.E.S.T. in 5 (5 minutes) 3) One closing line: "I've reflected enough for tonight. The rest can wait."

Style 3 — The Exhausted Human. For nights you have nothing left. This is not the "lesser" version — it's the one that keeps the habit alive on your worst days. 1) Say out loud: "Loop started" for whatever's loudest (10 seconds) 2) Run R.E.S.T. in 2 minutes (the short version) 3) One closing line: "Done. Bed."

Pick one now. Which style are you?

R.E.S.T. in 5 Minutes — The Night + 3 A.M. Version (Full)

You've used a version of this since the Quick Start. Here's the complete walkthrough, meant to become automatic by the end of this week.

R — Recognize (30 seconds) "What am I looping about?" "I keep replaying ____." Rate the intensity (0–10): ____ E — Extract (1 minute) "Story about me: this means I'm ____." "Story about others/future: they think ____ / this will lead to ____." S — Scan (1–2 minutes) Write 1–2 facts that don't fully support the worst story. Then write a balanced possibility: "It's possible that ____." T — Transition (1 minute) Write a closing sentence: "I've done what I can for today. Tomorrow-me will handle the rest." "This thought can exist, but it doesn't run my night." "I choose rest over more analysis." Then choose one tiny action for tomorrow — or "no action needed."

If You Wake at 3 A.M.

Do the same process once. Not twice. Not until you feel calm — once, on purpose, then back to bed.

Common mistake at 3 A.M.: negotiating with the loop. "Just a few more minutes of thinking and I'll really be done." That's the loop talking, not you. Run R.E.S.T. once, close it, and treat the negotiation itself as a signal to stop.

Micro-R.E.S.T.: The 2-Minute Workday Version

Use this right after a stressful meeting or message, so the loop doesn't grow legs by the time you get home.

R: "Loop started." E: "Story: they think I'm ____." S: "Evidence: nothing's actually confirmed; I'm filling a gap with fear." T: "I'll revisit this tonight if needed. Right now I return to my task."

This is Week 4's version of the "20-second protocol" you've been using since Week 1 — same bones, slightly more structure, because by now the moves are familiar.

High-Threat Weeks: Reviews, Presentations, and Big Changes

Some weeks are not average weeks. A performance review, a big presentation, a reorg — these carry real stakes, and it's reasonable for your body to treat them differently.

The goal isn't to convince yourself a high-threat week is low-threat. It's to prep your mind so the real stakes don't turn into round-the-clock rumination.

Before a high-threat event: 1) Name it honestly: "This week is genuinely higher-stakes. That's not catastrophizing — it's true." 2) Separate preparation from rumination using the 2-question test from Week 1: is more thinking leading to a next step, or just repeating? 3) Convert nervous energy into one visible action: a prep list, a run-through, a question you'll ask beforehand. 4) Set a hard stop time each night: "I prepare until 8 p.m. After that, I close, regardless of how ready I feel."

Emergency Script: "I Think I Bombed It"

For right after the presentation, the meeting, the conversation — when you're replaying it in real time and it feels undeniable.

Say or write: "Something happened. I don't yet know what it means. My brain is already writing the worst version. I will gather real information before I decide how bad this was. Tonight, I run R.E.S.T. once. Tomorrow, if there's something to fix, I'll fix it then."

Then run R.E.S.T. in 5 once, and stop. Judging the damage at 9 p.m. on adrenaline is never accurate. Wait for morning data.

Week 4 Daily Plan

Standard Plan (10–15 minutes/day)

Morning (1 minute) "Today I'm not aiming for a quiet mind. I'm aiming for closure tonight."

During work (as needed, 10–20 seconds each time) Use Micro-R.E.S.T. after any stressful meeting or message.

Evening (10–15 minutes) Run your chosen Nightly Decompression Ritual in full.

Busy Week Plan (5–8 minutes/day) — Skip the full ritual; go straight to R.E.S.T. in 5 at night. Use Micro-R.E.S.T. during the day if a loop starts.

Crisis Mode (2–5 minutes/day) — R.E.S.T. in 2 minutes, once, at night. That still counts. You're still closing the day.

Week 4 Checklist (daily)

- I used Micro-R.E.S.T. at least once today, if needed
- I ran my Nightly Decompression Ritual (or the 2-minute version)
- I wrote or said a real closing sentence — not just “I guess I’m done”
- I stopped negotiating with the loop after doing the process once

3–4 checks = you’re doing Week 4 correctly.

Week 4 Troubleshooting

“My closing sentence feels fake.” That’s normal at first. You’re not required to fully believe it — you’re training your nervous system to recognize the signal. Belief tends to catch up after repetition, not before it.

“I did the ritual, but I still woke up at 3 A.M.” That can still happen, especially early on. The measure of progress isn’t “never wakes up.” It’s “when I wake up, I now have a tool instead of nothing.” Run R.E.S.T. once, note how much shorter the spiral was compared to Week 1, and go back to sleep.

“A high-threat week hit and I abandoned the whole program.” That’s what Crisis Mode is for. R.E.S.T. in 2 minutes, once a night, through the whole event. You don’t need the full ritual during a genuinely hard week — you need the smallest version that keeps the habit alive.

“I don’t know which ritual style fits me.” Try Planner for two nights, Reflective for two nights, Exhausted Human for the rest. By Sunday you’ll know which one you reach for without resistance — that’s your answer.

Re-Baseline: Measuring Progress Against Your Quick Start Baseline

Pull out your original baseline snapshot from the Quick Start. Answer the same questions again, honestly: 1) How long does it usually take you to fall asleep now? (compare to your Quick Start baseline) 2) How long do you replay work conversations at night now? 3) How often does work overthinking wake you up now — Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Often? 4) What’s your average loop intensity now (0–10)?

Most people don’t see “zero overthinking.” They see: loops that used to run 90 minutes now running 20; intensity that used to sit at 8/10 now averaging 4–5/10; a brain that still has the thought, but no longer disappears into it.

That shift — shorter, less intense, less total — is what success actually looks like. Not silence. Rest.

End of Week 4 Review

At the end of the week, answer: 1) Which ritual style did I end up using most: ____ 2) My biggest win this week was: ____ 3) Comparing to your Quick Start baseline, what’s actually different: ____ 4) One thing I still want to work on: ____

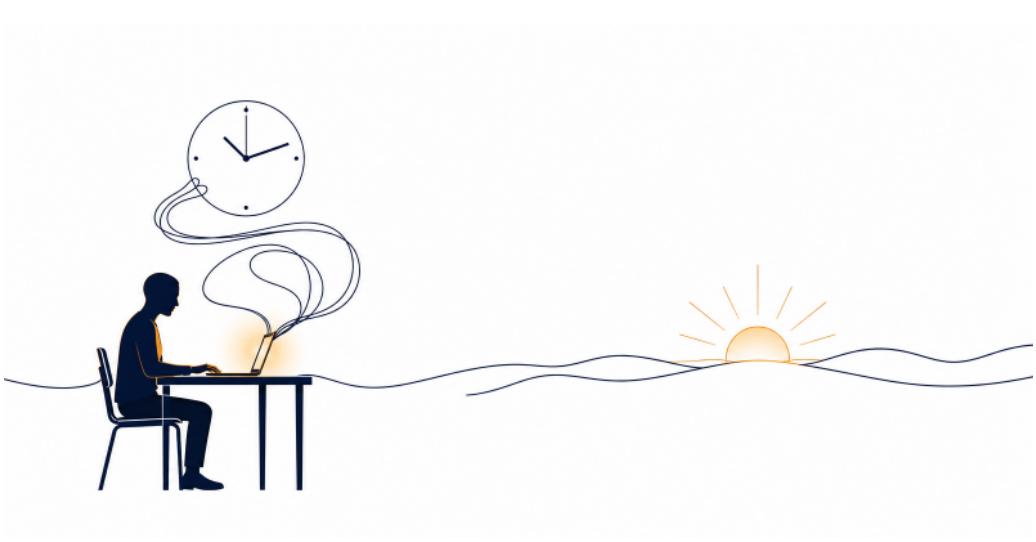
Then write: “I don’t need a quiet mind. I need a way to close the day — and now I have one.”

That’s the end of the 4-week program. What comes next is making this your new default, not a program you finish and forget.

What Comes Next

Part IV — After the Detox. You now have all four moves: Recognize, Extract, Scan, Transition. Part IV isn't a new method. It's how you keep this from fading in three weeks the way most self-help attempts do — a lightweight maintenance plan, a rebuilt workday, and guidance on when to bring in outside support. Turn the page when you're ready.

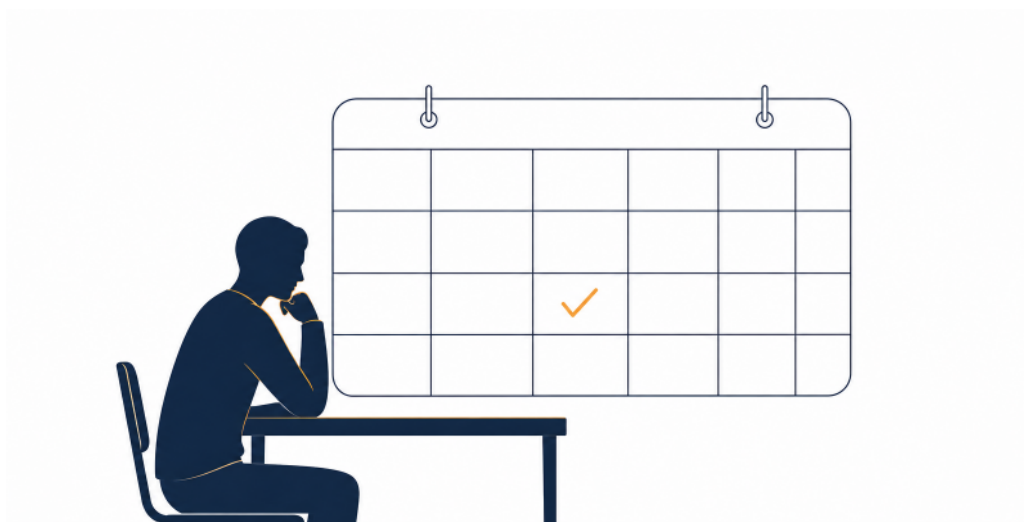
PART IV — After the Detox: Make Calm Your New Normal



Four weeks doesn't rewire a lifetime habit permanently. It builds the skill. This part is about keeping it.

Most self-help fails at exactly this point — not because the method was wrong, but because nobody built a plan for week 5, week 12, month 6. That's what Part IV is for.

Chapter 10 — The Maintenance Plan (10 Minutes/Week)



You're not doing daily Loop Logs forever. You're not running R.E.S.T. five times a day for the rest of your career. That was training. This is upkeep.

The Weekly “Maintenance R.E.S.T.” Once a week — same day, same time, so it becomes automatic — spend 10 minutes: 1) Recognize: Did any loop run longer than a day this week? Name it in one line. 2) Extract: What story did it tell? One line. 3) Scan: What's one piece of evidence you almost forgot? 4) Transition: Write one closing sentence for the week.

That's it. Ten minutes. Not a full return to daily logging — a checkup.

How to Prevent Relapse Without Over-Monitoring Yourself. There's a trap on both sides here. Under-monitor, and old patterns creep back silently. Over-monitor, and you turn maintenance into a new obsession — logging every thought “just in case.”

The rule: if you can go two weeks without needing the full method even once, that's success, not a warning sign. The tools are there for when you need them, not a quota you have to hit.

Watch for one honest signal instead of tracking everything: are your nights getting longer and harder again, more often than not? If yes, drop back into Week 1 pacing for a few days. If no, you're maintaining.

Chapter 11 — Build a Workday You Don't Need to Recover From



The 4-week program taught you what to do after a spiral starts. This chapter is about reducing how often one starts at all.

Micro-Habits for Meetings. Before a meeting where you'll speak up, decide in advance: "One neutral face doesn't mean the room disagrees." After you speak, resist checking reactions in real time. Reactions in the moment are a terrible source of information — most people are thinking about their own turn to speak, not grading yours. If a meeting ends and something feels "off," use Micro-R.E.S.T. before you leave the call, not three hours later.

Slack and Email Boundaries That Actually Work. Short replies ("ok," "noted," a lone thumbs-up) are not verdicts. They're often just how a busy person types. Decide this once, in advance, so you're not re-litigating it every time. Set an actual cutoff time for checking messages after hours. Not "I'll try to stop earlier" — an actual time, written down, that you tell at least one other person about so it's real. If you catch yourself drafting a message and deleting it three times, that's a loop, not an editing process. Name it: "I'm looping on this message," then either send a reasonable version or wait until tomorrow.

Asking for Feedback Without Spiraling. Feedback dread often comes from asking vague questions that leave room for your brain to fill in the worst answer. Ask specific questions instead: Instead of: "How did that go?" (invites a vague, spiral-friendly answer). Try: "Was the structure clear, or should I change the order next time?" (invites a specific, useful answer). Specific questions get specific answers. Specific answers are much harder for an anxious brain to turn into a catastrophe.

Chapter 12 — Talking About This with Your Manager or Therapist



You don't owe anyone a full account of your inner life to get support. But a short, honest framing can go a long way — with a manager, a mentor, or a therapist.

How to Explain What You're Working On (Without Oversharing). A simple version that works in most professional contexts: "I tend to overanalyze feedback and quiet moments more than they usually deserve. I'm actively working on it — I don't need anything from you, just wanted to name it so it doesn't look like I'm reading into things that aren't there." That's it. You don't need to explain the whole method. You're not asking for accommodation — you're giving context, which often changes how the other person interprets your questions or your silence afterward.

When to Consider Professional Support (and What You Can Ask For). This program is built for a specific, common pattern: work-related rumination and overthinking. It is not a substitute for therapy, and it's worth bringing in professional support if: the pattern extends well beyond work into most areas of your life; it's affecting your sleep most nights, not just after hard weeks; you notice symptoms beyond overthinking — persistent low mood, panic, or using substances to cope; you've done the 4 weeks honestly and the intensity hasn't moved at all.

If you do seek support, you can bring this book with you. A useful opening line for a first session: "I've been using a structured approach to interrupt work-related rumination, and I want help going deeper on where this comes from." Therapists are often glad to build on something you've already started, rather than starting from zero.

Chapter 13 — Your 30-Day Continuation Plan



The Simplest Way to Keep Improving After the 4 Weeks. You don't need a new program. You need a light, sustainable rhythm.

Weeks 5–8: Keep the Maintenance R.E.S.T. (Chapter 10) running once a week. If a specific trigger keeps resurfacing — a particular type of meeting, a specific person's communication style — spend one Story Extraction Worksheet and one Evidence Bank entry specifically on that trigger, the way you did in Weeks 2 and 3.

Month 2 and beyond: Re-run your baseline snapshot from the Quick Start once a month. Compare the numbers. Most people find the biggest jump happens between month 1 and month 3 — not because anything dramatic happens, but because the R.E.S.T. steps stop being something you do and start being something you just are.

If you relapse into a hard stretch: Don't restart the whole 4 weeks from scratch out of guilt. Drop back into Week 1 pacing (Loop Log only) for 3–5 days, let awareness rebuild, then return to Maintenance. A relapse is information, not a failure of the method — usually it means something genuinely changed (new manager, new role, more visible work), and your nervous system is recalibrating to a real shift, not backsliding for no reason.

You Don't Graduate from Having a Brain

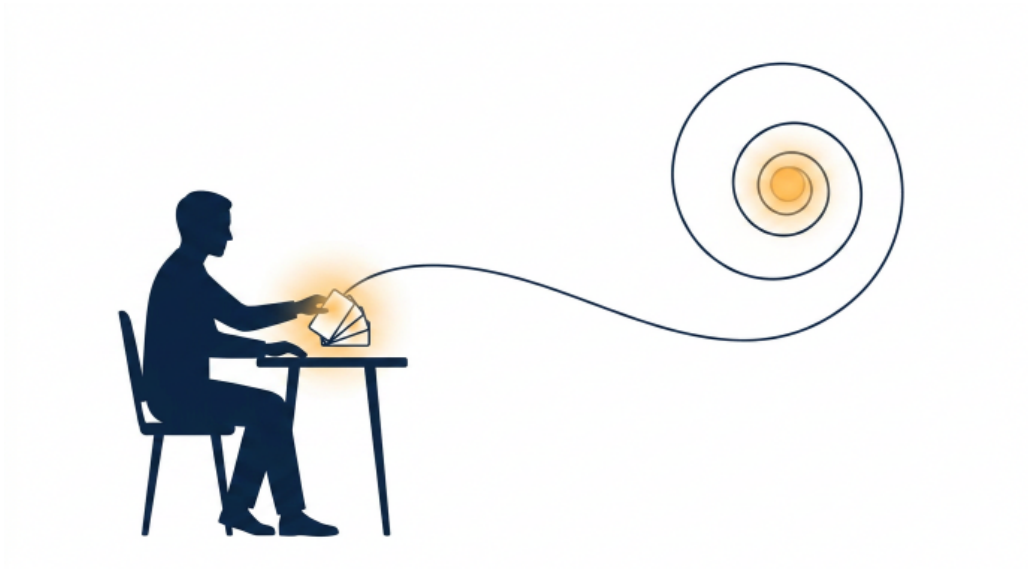
This program doesn't promise you'll stop noticing tone shifts, ambiguous messages, or awkward silences. That noticing is part of being a person who cares about their work and the people around them.

What changes is what happens next. The loop that used to run for hours now runs for minutes, or doesn't get traction at all. The 3 A.M. wake-up that used to spiral for an hour now has an off-ramp you actually use.

That's not becoming a different person. That's a nervous system that finally has a reliable response instead of no response at all.

Turn the page for your cheat sheets, templates, and scripts — the tools this book is really for.

APPENDICES & RESOURCES



These are clean, printable versions of every tool in this book. No new concepts here — just the reference copies you'll actually keep open on your phone or pinned above your desk.

Appendix A — R.E.S.T. Cheat Sheets



One-Page Overview — R.E.S.T., Your Default Response to Work Replays

R — Recognize: “I’m looping.” Name it. Rate intensity (0–10).

E — Extract: “This means I’m ____.” / “They think ____ / this will lead to ____.”

S — Scan: Write 1–2 facts that don’t fully support the story. Write a balanced possibility.

T — Transition: Write a closing sentence. Choose one tiny action, or “no action needed.”

Rule: do it once, then stop. Don’t negotiate with the loop.

Micro-R.E.S.T. (2 Minutes, After a Meeting or Message)

R: “Loop started.” E: “Story: they think ____.” S: “Evidence: nothing’s confirmed; I’m filling a gap with fear.” T: “I’ll revisit tonight if needed. Right now I return to my task.”

Night / 3 A.M. Quick Guide

1. Open this sheet.
2. Run R.E.S.T. once on the loop you’re having right now.
3. Close the book and go to bed. That’s a full win — that counts as a full day. If you wake again later, run it once more, then stop and return to sleep.

Wallet / Phone Card Version

R — Name the loop. E — Name the story. S — Name one fact that doesn’t fit. T — Name your closing line. Then stop.

Appendix B — Loop Log Template (Printable + Digital)



LOOP LOG — Daily 3-Minute Entry

Date:

Time you're logging:

1. What happened? (facts only, 1–3 sentences)

2. When did the loop start? (right away / later / commute / bedtime / 3 A.M.)

3. What did I keep replaying? (phrase, expression, silence, tone, message)

4. What story did my brain start telling? (“This means I’m ____.” / “They think ____.” / “This will lead to ____.”)

5. Body signal: (what did you feel physically?)

6. Loop intensity (0–10):

7. How long did I stay in it (approx.)?

8. Label I can use next time (one sentence — e.g. “Loop started.” “Mind-reading.” “Rumination.”)

Rules: one entry per day. One loop per entry — pick the loudest. Three minutes is enough. No solving — this is data collection, not a trial.

Appendix C — Story Extraction Worksheet Template (Printable + Digital)

STORY EXTRACTION — Full Version

Date:

Loop topic (1 line):

1) Event: What happened? (facts only — write like a camera)

2) Meaning: What is my brain saying it means? (“This means I’m ____.” “This means they think ____.”)

3) Threat: What is my brain afraid will happen next? (“And then I fear ____.” “Worst-case outcome: ____.”)

4) Believability + intensity (0–10):

5) Body signal (1 phrase):

6) What would I tell a friend? (one sentence, same situation)

7) Tiny next step (optional, only if the story is true):

Stop here. Close the page. That counts.

90-Second Mini Version (For Tired Days)

1. Event (facts): ____ 2. Story (meaning): “This means I’m ____.” 3. Threat: “And then I fear ____.” 4. Believability (0–10): ____

Appendix D — Evidence Bank Template (Printable + Digital)

EVIDENCE BANK — Full Version

Date:

Story I'm testing (1 line):

1) Wins (clear positives this week):

2) Neutrals (nothing bad happened — write at least one):

3) Contradictions (facts that clash with the worst story):

4) Balanced possibility: “It’s possible that ____.”

5) Believability before / after (0–10):

Shorthand Version (Busy Weeks)

Story: ____ One win: ____ One neutral: ____ One contradiction: ____

Appendix E — R.E.S.T. in 5 Minutes Sheet (Printable + Digital)



R.E.S.T. IN 5 — Night + 3 A.M. Version

R — Recognize (30 seconds): “I keep replaying ____.” Intensity (0–10): ____

E — Extract (1 minute): “Story about me: this means I’m ____.” “Story about others/future: they think ____ / this will lead to ____.”

S — Scan (1–2 minutes): Fact that doesn’t fully match this story: ____ Another fact: ____
Balanced possibility: “It’s possible that ____.”

T — Transition (1 minute): Closing sentence: ____ Tiny action for tomorrow (or “no action needed”): ____

R.E.S.T. in 2 Minutes (Crisis / Exhausted Version)

R: “Loop started.” E: “Story: ____.” S: “Evidence: ____.” T: “Done for tonight. Bed.”

Appendix F — Nightly Decompression Ritual Templates (3 Styles)



The Planner

1. Tomorrow's top 3 tasks (2 min):

2. R.E.S.T. in 5 on today's loudest loop (5 min)
3. Closing line: "The plan is written. Tonight I rest."

The Reflective

1. What went okay today / what didn't / what I'm taking forward (3 min):

2. R.E.S.T. in 5 (5 min)
3. Closing line: "I've reflected enough for tonight. The rest can wait."

The Exhausted Human

1. Say out loud: "Loop started" (10 sec)
2. R.E.S.T. in 2 minutes
3. Closing line: "Done. Bed."

Appendix G — Scripts Library



Words You Can Borrow When You're Activated

After an awkward meeting:

"Neutral reactions are not proof. I will not mind-read a silence."

After tough feedback:

"Feedback on my work is not a verdict on my worth. I can improve something without something being wrong with me."

After an unclear message:

"I don't have enough data to interpret this. I'll ask for clarity, or I'll wait for more information — not fill the gap with fear."

After silence from your manager:

"Silence usually means 'no news,' not 'bad news.' I'll act if something actually requires it."

Before sleep:

"I've captured what I can tonight. Tomorrow-me will handle the rest."

At 3 A.M.:

"I am noticing a loop. I am not required to solve it right now."

Before a high-stakes event:

"This week is genuinely higher-stakes. That's not catastrophizing — it's true. I prepare, then I stop."

Right after you think you "bombed it":

"Something happened. I don't yet know what it means. I'll gather real information before I decide how bad this was."

Appendix H — Further Support

This book is designed to work as a standalone daily practice. If you want to go deeper on the ideas behind it, here are a few directions worth exploring:

- On rumination and anxious thinking: *The Worry Trick* by David Carbonell, or *Get Out of Your Head* by Jennie Allen
- On workplace confidence and imposter feelings: *The Imposter Cure* by Dr. Jessamy Hibberd
- On nervous system regulation and sleep: *Why We Sleep* by Matthew Walker
- Finding a therapist: Psychology Today’s “Find a Therapist” directory

This book is not a substitute for professional care.

If you’re in crisis or feel unsafe, contact your local emergency number or a crisis line in your country right now. You deserve real-time support, not a book.

About the Author

Maren Cole writes about workplace psychology and practical, structured tools for managing work-related anxiety and rumination.
