

H E A L I N G T H E S Y S T E M

Overthinking IFS Self-Reflection Tool

A worksheet for getting curious about the part that won't stop thinking

This is an educational self-reflection tool. It is not a clinical assessment and does not constitute a diagnosis of any mental health condition or disorder. It is designed to support self-awareness and curiosity — not to replace professional evaluation.

Before You Begin

In Internal Family Systems (IFS), overthinking is understood as the work of a protective part of yourself that uses analysis, planning, and mental rehearsal to keep you safe. It isn't a flaw. It's a strategy your system developed, usually for very good reasons.

This worksheet isn't about fixing your overthinking. It's about meeting this protective part with curiosity instead of frustration.

Part 1 — Noticing the Pattern

Start by mapping when and how your overthinking part tends to show up. There are no right answers — just honest ones.

1. When does the overthinking tend to start?

Is there a particular time of day, context, or type of situation where you notice it most?

2. What does the overthinking actually sound like inside?

Try to capture the tone. Is it fast and urgent? Circular? Critical? Pleading?

3. What does this part seem to be trying to figure out or prevent?

If you had to guess what the overthinking is working toward — what would it be?

Part 2 — Getting Curious About the Protector

Now try shifting from *being in* the overthinking to *noticing* it. You don't need to stop it. Just see if you can observe it with a bit of distance.

4. If this part of you had a role or a job title, what would it be?

The planner? The scenario-tester? The damage-control officer? Give it a name that feels accurate.

5. How long has this part been doing this work?

Can you remember when it first showed up? What was happening in your life at the time?

6. What does this part believe will happen if it stops?

This is often the most revealing question. Take your time with it.

Part 3 — What the Protector Might Need

Our protective parts work hard. They rarely get thanked for it. This section is about acknowledging what your overthinking part has been doing — and beginning to ask what it might need from you.

7. What would you want to say to this part, if it could hear you?

Not to correct it. Not to shut it down. Just to acknowledge it.

8. What might this protective impulse need in order to relax — even a little?

Safety? Reassurance? Permission to not have all the answers?

9. Is there something underneath the overthinking that this part might be protecting you from feeling?

Vulnerability? Grief? Shame? Uncertainty? You don't need to have a clear answer. Just notice what comes up.

After You've Finished

The value of this worksheet is in the noticing itself — in the shift from being inside the pattern to seeing it from the outside.

If something surprised you, or if a question felt harder than expected, that's useful information. It's often a sign that the part is protecting something important.

You can return to this worksheet whenever the overthinking feels loud. Each time, you may notice something different.

About

Ben Carey Donaldson is a certified IFS practitioner, meditation guide, and group facilitator based in the Fontainebleau–Paris region of France. He works online with English- and French-speaking clients across Europe and internationally, supporting people who want to understand their inner patterns and build a more grounded relationship with themselves.

Learn more at bencareydonaldson.com