

Discussion Guide: How to Quit Overthinking

Please use the questions below to guide your discussion after listening to the corresponding episode of Looking Up. The goal of the discussion guides is to build community and support learning about an important topic in women's leadership development. We've included a few suggestions to read further if you want to learn more.

Begin:

Establish norms. Take a moment to affirm the importance of a safe space, explain what that looks like in a group discussion like this, and name other conditions necessary for a comfortable discussion where everyone can contribute with authenticity and vulnerability.

Discuss:

1. How has overthinking affected your life? What role does overthinking play for you when you respond to distress? Share stories if you are comfortable!
2. How has overthinking affected your confidence and decision making skills at key moments?
3. Reflect on the finding that women are more likely than men to overthink. Explore as a group why being female and overthinking often go hand in hand.
4. Overthinking occurs partly as a response to messages we hear about not speaking up or sharing our feelings. Consider Kelly's story about being warned not to "roll her neck" at a meeting. How might being a person of color affect whether or not you speak up? How might your identity affect the way others perceive your communication style?
5. Do you agree with Kelly's point that overthinking is often activated when we make assumptions about ourselves and others? Remember Rachel's story about assuming people didn't want to hang out with her. Share a story about this if you have one.
6. Have you ever co-ruminated, or engaged in overthinking out loud with another person? What was that like? Why might talking with our friends or family like this be hard to stop?
7. Rachel says we can manage overthinking by getting out of our heads and focusing on the present moment. As a group, try pausing and focusing on your breathing for 10 seconds. Next, focus on an object in the room, turning all your attention to it for as long as you can hold it. How do these mindfulness practices affect you?

Close: What will you take from this conversation going forward?

Go Further:

Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, [Women Who Think Too Much: How to Break Free of Overthinking and Change Your Life](#)