

THE THOUGHT WALL

A place to put everything that is taking up space in your head

Some thoughts arrive quietly. Others repeat, collide, shout, replay conversations, predict the future or pull us back into the past. When everything stays inside, it can become difficult to work out what we are actually thinking, what we are feeling and what needs our attention.

The Thought Wall gives those thoughts somewhere to land. You do not have to make them tidy, reasonable, positive or easy to explain. The first job is simply to get them out of your head and onto the wall.

There is no 'right' thought to put here

A thought can be frightened, angry, confused, contradictory, embarrassing, repetitive or unfinished. Writing a thought down does not mean you agree with it, want it to happen or have to act on it. It means you have noticed that it is there.

Why putting thoughts somewhere can help

When we are overwhelmed, thoughts can feel fused together. Seeing them separately can create a little distance. That distance may make it easier to notice patterns, identify the feeling underneath, recognise uncertainty and decide whether anything actually needs doing.

For some people, especially when stressed, anxious, grieving, traumatised, burnt out or neurodivergently overwhelmed, speaking can be much harder than writing. The wall can be used before a conversation, after a difficult day, during a period of rumination or simply when your head feels too full.

Start with whatever is loudest

Try: *I can't stop thinking about... Something I haven't told anyone... I'm frightened that... I'm angry because... I keep replaying... I wish I could say... What if...? Part of me wants...*

THROW IT AT THE WALL

Do not edit. Do not explain. Do not decide whether it is sensible. Give each thought its own space.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	

If you get stuck

Begin with fragments rather than sentences: *work... money... that conversation... my body... tomorrow... being judged... I am tired of... I need... I don't want to admit...* You can scribble, use one word, draw a shape or leave a space blank. This is your wall.

Permission to stop

If writing begins to make you feel more distressed rather than more settled, stop. Put the page down, orient yourself to the room and do something grounding. You can return later, or choose not to return at all.

WHAT BOUNCED BACK?

Now look at the wall as information, not evidence against you.

Choose only one or two thoughts. You do not need to analyse the whole wall. Read the thought and notice what happens next. What feeling appears? What does your body do? Does another thought immediately answer it?

1. What kind of thought is this?

It might be a **fact**, a **fear**, a **memory**, an **assumption**, a **prediction**, a **need**, a **question**, an **inner rule** or something you simply **do not know yet**. You are not trying to prove yourself wrong. You are trying to understand what you are carrying.

2. What feeling sits underneath it?

Anger can sit above hurt. Irritability can sit above exhaustion. Control can sit above fear. Numbness can sit beside grief. Relief and guilt can exist together. Try to name what is present without forcing one neat emotion.

3. What is happening in my body?

Notice your jaw, shoulders, chest, stomach, breathing, hands, legs and energy level. A thought may be accompanied by tension, heat, nausea, heaviness, restlessness, shutdown or no obvious physical feeling at all.

4. What does this thought need from me?

Not every thought needs an answer. Some need information. Some need reassurance. Some point towards a boundary, a conversation, rest, practical action or support. Others may simply need to be acknowledged and left on the wall for now.

A useful question

If I did not have to solve this tonight, what would I need for the next hour?

That answer may be much smaller and more manageable than solving the whole problem.

My bounce-back notes

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

SORT WITHOUT JUDGING

The aim is not to turn every difficult thought into a positive one.

Look back at what you wrote and, if useful, mark each thought with one of these simple categories. A thought can belong in more than one.

ACTION	There is a realistic step I can take.
SUPPORT	I may need to tell, ask or involve somebody.
INFORMATION	I am filling a gap with assumptions; I need more facts.
FEELING	This may need to be felt or expressed rather than fixed.
NOT TODAY	It matters, but I do not have to deal with it right now.
LET IT STAY	I can notice this thought without following it further.

What needs something from me?

One small action I could take: _____

Something I might need help with: _____

Something I can leave on the wall today: _____

Something I want to come back to: _____

After using the wall

Move away from the page for a moment. Look around and name a few things you can see. Feel your feet or another point of contact with the floor or chair. Take a drink if that is comfortable. Stretch, shake out your hands, step outside, listen to something familiar or choose another sensory reset that works for you.

The goal is not to finish with an empty mind. It is to finish with a little more space between you and everything your mind is carrying.

WHEN A THOUGHT NEEDS TO BE SHARED

Some things are easier to write than to say. The wall can be a bridge into asking for support.

You could show somebody the page, copy one sentence into a message, take it to therapy or use it to begin a conversation. You do not have to explain the whole story at once. A starting sentence can be: *There is something I have been carrying and I don't know how to say it out loud yet.*

If the wall contains thoughts about harming yourself or somebody else, or you feel you may not be able to stay safe, treat that as something that deserves immediate human support rather than something you have to hold alone. In the UK, you can contact NHS 111 and select the mental health option where available, call Samaritans on 116 123, or call 999 / attend A&E; in an emergency.

A message from Maggie

There are thoughts we say easily and thoughts we hide because they feel too messy, too painful, too angry, too frightening or too difficult to explain. I wanted this wall to give those thoughts somewhere to exist without demanding that you immediately make sense of them.

You do not have to turn everything into a lesson. You do not have to find the positive. Sometimes the important thing is simply being able to say, 'This is what is in my head today.' Once it is visible, you can decide what - if anything - you want to do with it.

Use the wall in your own way. Write one word or fill every space. Come back to it or tear it up. Share it or keep it private. The wall is a tool; you are the person who decides what happens next.

Further reading

Overcoming Unwanted Intrusive Thoughts - Sally M. Winston & Martin N. Seif

The Happiness Trap - Russ Harris

Why Has Nobody Told Me This Before? - Dr Julie Smith

Mind Over Mood - Dennis Greenberger & Christine A. Padesky

Clinical notes and sources

This resource draws on established psychological ideas including expressive writing, cognitive distancing/defusion, emotion labelling, metacognitive awareness and grounding. Useful background includes Pennebaker & Smyth's work on expressive writing; Acceptance and Commitment Therapy approaches to cognitive defusion; and cognitive behavioural approaches that encourage identifying thoughts, emotions and behavioural responses.

Important: This guide is for information and self-reflection and is not a diagnosis or a substitute for individual medical or psychological care.