



**Discussion Questions for *Women Who Think Too Much*  
by Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, Ph.D.**

1. What are some of the distinctions between destructive overthinking and prudent planning? How can you tell when you've begun thinking "too much"?
2. The first part of chapter one mentions the unprecedented growth in independence and opportunities experienced by women over the past forty years as well as the fact that women are twice as likely as men to become severely depressed or anxious. In your experience, have the liberating legal and societal changes of the late twentieth century simultaneously created new constraints for women?
3. The book's subtitle proposes that overthinking can prevent women from truly embracing their lives. What are some of the ways in which overthinking acts as a barrier to authenticity? In particular, what can morbid meditations reveal about sense of self?
4. How did you react to your results of the quiz on page 13? Which category presents the greatest challenge to you?
5. Pessimism and self-criticism are mentioned in the book as being especially harmful "thought pollutants." What are their societal origins? Considering the brain's impulse to connect otherwise unrelated negative thoughts, what are some of your own barriers to optimism and self-confidence? How can we heal thought processes without their metamorphosing into an outlook of entitlement and blame?
6. Consider the techniques listed on pages 78 and 79. What specific tasks could you apply to tailor this list to your own circumstances? Which loved ones could be enlisted to help, without risking a tit-for-tat escalation of negative thoughts? How could you apply the "breaking free" tactics to a particularly stressful situation or relationship in your life right now?
7. The drawbacks to "if only" thinking are numerous, but inaction is equally problematic. Consider some of your most frequently mentioned goals, and assess whether they serve as stalling devices or are actually healthy steps that deserve immediate action.
8. How does the concept of a nemesis, on the job or in a social context, fit in with the book's assertions about "if only" thinking?
9. Spend a few minutes outlining your life's narrative, without considering why your path unfolded as it did. Using the tools offered on pages 128 and 129, map out a vision for your next chapter. Which characters from your current "storyline" will need to play a diminished role? Which aspects will you enhance?
10. What is your greatest obstacle in simplifying your life? Remember to keep the response simple.

11. Explore the career sketch provided in chapter ten. Were you able to relate to Abby's impulsive job change? How would you have responded if you were Gina, Abby's roommate?
12. Chapter eleven mentions that optimists appear to fight illness more successfully than pessimists. Consider the ways in which this mind-body connection has affected your own health and that of your family.
13. How can readers avoid the conundrum of overthinking the problem of thinking too much? Discuss some of the ways in which you can implement Dr. Nolen-Hoeksema's advice through action rather than through rumination.
14. *Women Who Think Too Much* concludes with inspiration for changing the tide of history. Does your culture or community reinforce negative moods, including helplessness, hopelessness, sadness, and anxiety, in its daughters? Propose your own ideas for eradicating the problem of overthinking among future generations.