

# MITIGATING ↓

## THE MENTAL LOAD

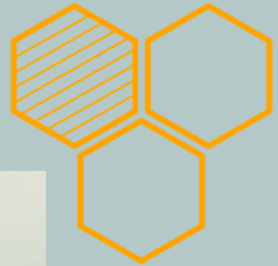
It isn't laziness, it's cognitive overload

### Think Hive



### Health

WOMEN'S HEALTH



# THE MENTAL "SYSTEM CRASH" : WHY YOU FEEL STUCK



**Let's start with a tough question: When was the last time you tried to make a simple decision, like choosing a dinner recipe or tackling a bill and your brain just hit a "Page Not Found" error?**

Between managing the kids' schedules, navigating the rising cost of living, and carrying the "mental load" of an entire household, you're also trying to plan your next professional chapter. You want that independence. You want to work. But instead of taking action, you feel foggy. You feel paralysed.

It's Not Laziness—  
It's Overload.

If you feel stuck, I want you to hear this: **You are not lazy.**

You are experiencing cognitive overload. Your internal hard drive is running at 99% capacity. Trying to launch a "career change" program while your system is already maxed out is why everything feels like it's crashing.

# UNDERSTANDING THE MENTAL LOAD

Working with mental health in mind

**IN PSYCHOLOGY, WE OFTEN TALK ABOUT THE "MENTAL LOAD." THIS IS THE INVISIBLE TO-DO LIST YOU CARRY AT ALL TIMES.**

It isn't just the act of doing the laundry; it's noticing the basket is full, checking the detergent levels, and remembering that tomorrow is PE day. It is the constant "project management" of life that never seems to turn off.



Using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), we can map out how this load affects your progress through a loop of Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviours:

- The Thought: "I've been out of the workforce too long; I'm unemployable."
- The Feeling: A heavy sense of anxiety or defeat.
- The Behaviour: You close the laptop and turn on Netflix instead.

This is called Avoidance. In the short term, avoidance is actually a brilliant survival strategy—it makes the stress vanish for an hour. But in the long term? It keeps your world feeling small.



## WHY WE STAY STUCK

We often stay stuck because we are waiting for "clarity" or "confidence" to arrive before we take action. Modern psychology, however, offers a powerful insight: Thoughts are just mental events. Just because your brain says, "I'm unqualified," doesn't mean it is a fact.

## GOAL MOVEMENT

Think of these thoughts as weather patterns passing through. You might see the clouds, but you don't have to let them stop you from walking. You can move toward your goals even while the "unqualified" thought is still drifting by.

MITIGATING THE MENTAL  
LOAD

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Breaking the cycle

# A NEW PERSPECTIVE: THOUGHTS VS. FACTS



# The 3 Buckets



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## THE "MUST-DO" BUCKET

Timeline: Today.

These are the non-negotiables. If you don't do these, there are immediate consequences.

- Examples: Feeding the family, attending a scheduled interview, or completing one specific, high-priority work task.
- The Rule: Keep this list tiny (3 items maximum).

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## THE "SHOULD-DO" BUCKET

Timeline: This Week.

These are important tasks that contribute to your long-term goals, but the world won't end if they happen tomorrow instead of today.

- Examples: Updating your CV header, responding to a networking email, or grocery shopping.
- The Rule: Move these to the "Must-Do" bucket only when you have the genuine capacity.



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## THE "COULD-DO" BUCKET

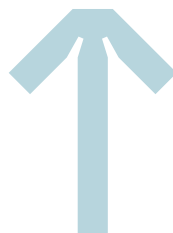
Timeline: Park It.

These are the "aspirational" tasks that often clutter your brain and trigger guilt.

- Examples: Reorganising the pantry, colour-coding your files, or starting a new hobby.
- The Rule: Give yourself explicit permission to forget these exist for now. If it's in this bucket, it doesn't deserve any of your current mental energy.



# SHRINK THE LOAD



The tools

# CHECKLIST

## ✔ THOUGHT DEFUSION (THE "OBSERVER" TRICK)

When a negative thought hits, it usually feels like an absolute fact. Thought Defusion is a simple technique to help you step back and see a thought for what it really is: just a sentence in your mind.

The **"I Am Having the Thought"** Shift

The next time you think, "I'll never find a job that fits around the kids," stop and rephrase it.

- The Old Way: "I'll never find a flexible job." (This feels like a heavy truth).
- The New Way: "I am having the thought that I'll never find a flexible job."

## ✔ THE 10-MINUTE RETURN

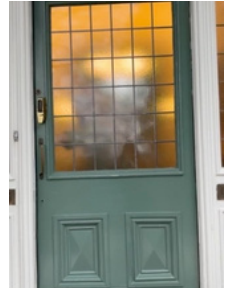
When you are feeling completely overwhelmed, the mountain in front of you looks too high to climb. The 10-Minute Return is designed to lower the stakes and break the "freeze" response.

Lower the Barrier to Entry

The hardest part of any task is almost always the "gate"—the moment you decide to start. To get through it, set a timer for just 10 minutes and commit to one tiny, low-pressure action.

- The Goal: Don't try to finish the task. Just start it.
- The Action: Open a job board. Just open the tab. You don't even have to scroll.
- The Result: Usually, once the timer starts, the "Freeze" response begins to melt. Action is the best antidote to anxiety; once you're 10 minutes in, you'll often find the momentum to keep going.

# VALUES OVER FEAR



**When we are overwhelmed, we often make decisions based on what we're afraid of. To shift gears, you need to change your focus from what you're avoiding to what you're moving toward.**

## Identify Your "Why"

Ask yourself: "What do I actually want?" Is it simply a paycheck, or are you looking for something deeper?

- Flexibility to be there for school plays?
- Security for your family's future?
- Meaning and a sense of personal identity?

## Who is Driving?

When you align your actions with your values, the fear doesn't necessarily disappear—but its role changes. Imagine your life is a car. Choosing to act on your values doesn't kick the fear out of the vehicle, but it does put it in the passenger seat. The fear can talk, it can even shout, but it doesn't get its hands on the wheel. You are the one driving.

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# Think Hive Health

## YOUR MOVE: THE SMALL STEP CHALLENGE

NOW IT'S TIME TO TAKE THE LEAD. DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE WHOLE MOUNTAIN—JUST FOCUS ON THE FIRST FEW FEET. PICK ONE SMALL STEP THAT TAKES LESS THAN 10 MINUTES AND DO IT TODAY.

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