

Mental Health  
Awareness Week  
21-27 September

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## The book of overthinking: How to stop the cycle of worry

Smith, Gwendoline. (2020). N.Z.: Allen & Unwin.

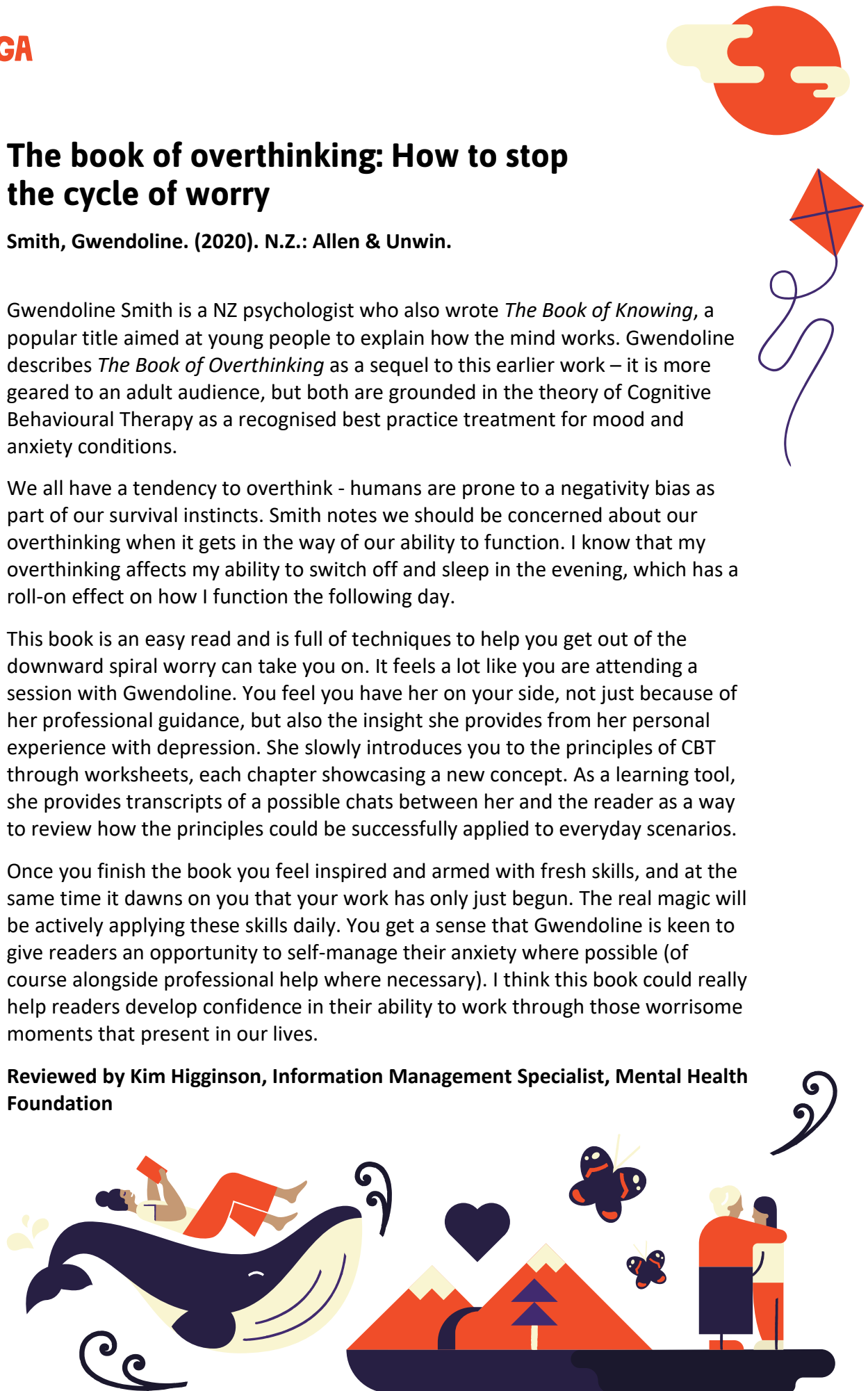
Gwendoline Smith is a NZ psychologist who also wrote *The Book of Knowing*, a popular title aimed at young people to explain how the mind works. Gwendoline describes *The Book of Overthinking* as a sequel to this earlier work – it is more geared to an adult audience, but both are grounded in the theory of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy as a recognised best practice treatment for mood and anxiety conditions.

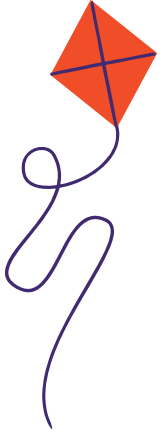
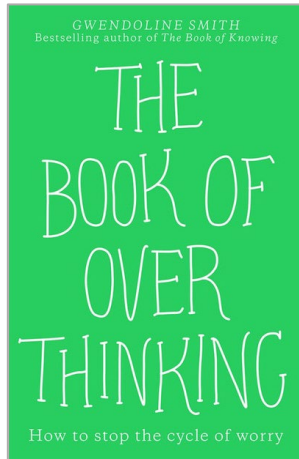
We all have a tendency to overthink - humans are prone to a negativity bias as part of our survival instincts. Smith notes we should be concerned about our overthinking when it gets in the way of our ability to function. I know that my overthinking affects my ability to switch off and sleep in the evening, which has a roll-on effect on how I function the following day.

This book is an easy read and is full of techniques to help you get out of the downward spiral worry can take you on. It feels a lot like you are attending a session with Gwendoline. You feel you have her on your side, not just because of her professional guidance, but also the insight she provides from her personal experience with depression. She slowly introduces you to the principles of CBT through worksheets, each chapter showcasing a new concept. As a learning tool, she provides transcripts of a possible chats between her and the reader as a way to review how the principles could be successfully applied to everyday scenarios.

Once you finish the book you feel inspired and armed with fresh skills, and at the same time it dawns on you that your work has only just begun. The real magic will be actively applying these skills daily. You get a sense that Gwendoline is keen to give readers an opportunity to self-manage their anxiety where possible (of course alongside professional help where necessary). I think this book could really help readers develop confidence in their ability to work through those worrisome moments that present in our lives.

**Reviewed by Kim Higginson, Information Management Specialist, Mental Health Foundation**





The Mental Health Foundation's Information Service brings you reviews as part of the Good Reads feature for Mental Health Awareness Week. To view more go to <https://mhaw.nz/>