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Title: The Power of the God Box in Overcoming Overthinking and Obsessions

Abstract: God Box is considered a container that enables individuals to overcome their problems. Using God Box starts with writing the cause of a predicament and submitting it to the God Box, hoping to move past that problem. God Box engraves Seligman's PERMA Model which focuses on creating a good life by looking at the strengths rather than weaknesses to overcome problems. Typical problems that God Box can help an individual overcome include a partner's alcoholism, family members' challenges, financial hurdles, marriage challenges, and addiction to substances. Emotional healing through God Box follows a deliberate decision to let go of overthinking and obsession to replace it with better experiences. Letting go means ceding control of obsessions and overthinking to the Higher Power and letting Him to handle them, an indication of a departure from those issues that occupy the mind. It is a shift in one's emotional perception of the problems of obsession and overthinking.

Key Terms: *Let Go, Overthinking, Obsession*

## Introduction

God Box is the word individuals use to describe a container upon which they submit written notes of causes of their fears or distresses hoping to get relief (Leit, 2022). This means that God Box is a tool that can be used in positive transformation, especially in regard to overcoming negative vibes. Binkley reflected on the negative consequences of overthinking and obsession and concluded that it is good to avoid them because they "distract us from spontaneous investments in life and immersion in the flow of activities, and inevitably drag us down, tangle us up, mire us, and prevent happy activity" (2011, p. 387). Hence, seeking freedom from overthinking using God Box can help an individual reclaim a happy life.

This paper suggests God Box as a tool for suppressing overthinking and obsession, including their debilitating consequence. It magnifies the effectiveness of reverent use of God Box as a tool used to overcome obsession and overthinking. To do this, the paper is organized as follows: Introduction of the psychology of overthinking and obsession, interpretation of use and application of God Box, using God Box in letting go of overthinking and obsession, comparison to meditation.

## Psychology of Overthinking and Obsession

The concept of overthinking is important to transpersonal psychology because it determines happiness. Lyubomirsky, in her book, *The How of Happiness*, defined overthinking as “thinking too much, needlessly, passively, endlessly, and excessively pondering the meaning, causes, and consequences of your character, your feelings, and your problems” (Lyubomirsky, 2007, p. 113). Overthinking affects concentration and initiative, debases happiness, promotes biased thinking, spoils an individual’s ability to solve a problem (Lyubomirsky, 2007). These experiences portray overthinking as a means for retaining a pessimistic view of oneself.

Talbert, in conceptualizing overthinking regarding knowing about other people, highlighted that knowing “how to do those things well involves not thinking too much” because doing so can lead to a condition known as choking or paralysis by analysis (2017, p. 6). Talbert introduced a different, important dimension to look at overthinking and obsession. This perspective emphasizes the need to avoid overthinking about things that are automatic to one’s life, just like an athlete should stop thinking about the sport and the competition for them to succeed. It characterizes some of the mundane activities that make up people’s lives in which overthinking and obsession can prove detrimental.

The concept of obsession is extensively presented in literature, especially in regard to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) in which obsessive compulsive disorder and schizophrenia retain special consideration (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In the strict sense, obsession implies assuming a position toward an idea, thought, or emotion, whereby the ego evaluates the aspects of consciousness as baseless, nonsensical, and incomprehensible, and defends itself against any attempt to usurp the status quo (Bürge, 2007).

This means obsession retains its position as long as nothing consciously unsettles it. Perhaps, this is why Daniel Hourigan (2011) defined obsession as an arduous and persistent preoccupation with something that is associated with feelings of distress or anxiety. Accordingly, obsession is linked to negative concepts such as infatuation, intoxication, or lust because the outcome is anxiety or fear.

Overthinking and obsession are common in everyday experiences because they occur for different reasons. Sperber argued that people overthink as a self-protection mechanism (Sperber, n.d). Specifically, an individual could overthink about their health, finances, or relationship because retaining control over such issues can be reassuring of wanting the best for themselves. Also, overthinking is an automatic and habitual process because people find themselves ruminating all the time. In the same way, obsession is an automatic process, where an individual seeks to understand or retain control of their most revered thoughts or ideas.

## The God Box Concept

The name God Box was first popularized in literature by Mary Lou Quinlan in her book, *God Box: Sharing my Mother's Gift of Faith, Love, and Letting Go*, published in 2012.

Quinlan described that she discovered her deceased mother's box, which was packed with notes of her tribulations that she surrendered to God. Also, Melody Beattie (2008) discussed the use of God Box in her book, *The New Codependency: Help and Guidance for Today's Generations*, where she suggested that an individual can list their problems, meditate for 15 minutes about them, and submit them to God Box. Additionally, only Young (2018) and Leit (2022) discuss God Box (or its variant) in empirical literature at the time of this publication.

God Box is a name designated for a small physical container. To some people, the container can be referred to as a Worry Box, Divine Box, Prayer Box, and Anxiety Gone Box. Whichever name used, individuals use God Box to turn problems over to Higher Power, which is outside of themselves (Leit, 2022). Using God Box involves identifying fears or obsessions that colonize inner self, writing them down on a piece of paper, and dumping them into God Box as a way of surrendering them to Higher Power (Beattie, 2008; Itel, 2022).

### The Working Art of God Box

Turning to God Box involves writing down on a piece of paper and submitting into a God Box. When overthinking and obsession set in and takes over inner self, an individual should define the problem, write it down in a couple of words on a piece of paper, and then insert it into God Box. The intentions of submitting the written notes in a God Box is to let go and surrender their will to a power greater than themselves. Writing helps the individual to note the sources of their predicament and support the process of reducing stress, which is variant of obsessive thinking (Meshberg-Cohen et al., 2014; Pavlacic et al., 2019). When an individual writes short notes of problems and submits into God Box, they are committing to improve their emotions, engagement, and relationship, which are essential elements of positive psychology.

Lyubomirsky (2007) illustrated the process of writing down problems as a way to cut loose from obsessive thoughts or overthinking. Though Lyubomirsky does not connect the element of writing to God Box or related practices, she argued that writing the ruminations helps in organizing, interpreting, and observing patterns that have never been seen before (Lyubomirsky, 2007). It is a way of relieving oneself of negative thoughts (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Using God Box as a positive psychology tool engraves Seligman's PERMA Model (2019). PERMA is the short form of Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, and Accomplishment that are aspects of well-being. As a model, it focuses on creating a good life by looking at the strengths, rather than weaknesses (Seligman, 2019). God Box uses the foundations of positive psychology as a means to move past overthinking and obsessions. Specifically, surrender to Higher Power, which denotes

submission of written notes of problems into a God Box, embodies spirituality and meaning. It is an act of acknowledging the influence of Higher Power in attaining happiness. Hence, turning problems to God Box aims to realize and retain positive emotions and meaning of relying on Higher Power.

Having conceptualized God Box as a mere container deriving its name from an individual's perspective and use, it is important to look at some of the items that people usually put in it. Some of these problems that individual submit into God Box are related to their self or partner's alcoholism, or illness, family members' challenges (alcoholism and illness), financial hurdles, emotional instability, marriage challenges, addiction to substances, as well as personal aspirations (Leit, 2022). In all these cases, the individual writes the problem on a piece of paper and submits it into God Box hoping to get relief. Alongside Leit's findings, Melody Beattie's perspective of God Box also embodies the use of God Box to overcome problems. Beattie suggested listing and submitting worries and obsessions into a God Box as a way of turning will and life over to Higher Power (God, in this case).

Beattie provided essential perspectives for understanding benefits of God Box in suppressing overthinking and obsessions. Writing notes and submitting into a God Box provides a means for arresting thoughts (Beattie, 2008). Using God Box is a personal experience that involves writing and submitting extant problems to a power outside themselves to be happy and relieved. These actions enable individuals to overcome life challenges and transform their lives as McWhinney and Markos (2003) submit that this type of transformation occurs because God Box swiftly reroutes and breaks down all patterns of obsession.

#### Letting Go of Overthinking and Obsessions Using God Box

Emotional healing follows a deliberate decision to let go of problems (Gow,1999).

Letting go means relinquishing control over problems, hoping to have a positive or better experience. Letting go allows an individual to focus on positive vibes that improve well-being (Maltman et al., 2020). According to Fourtounas, letting go is a process of "spiral mobility, as the past is returned to meet with the challenge in the present" (2003, p. 205). In other words, letting go of overthinking and obsession is a substitutionary process aimed at replacing bad with better experiences. Since turning to God Box means submitting problems of obsession and overthinking (written in a piece of paper) to a God Box in hopes of improving outcomes, letting go as adduced by Fourtounas (2003) and Maltman et al. (2020) demonstrates that God Box supports overcoming burdens of life. Turning to God Box means ceding control of the obsessions and overthinking to the Higher Power (whichever character they bestow that power upon), which implies a departure from issues associated with obsessions and overthinking that occupy the mind. Accordingly, turning to God Box with the written notes is a deliberate decision to let go of overthinking and obsessions and improve well-being (Maltman et al., 2020). The process is as evincible as admitting that the way to suppressing overthinking and

obsession is acknowledging that they exist and writing them down and submitting the notes to God Box is a commitment to let go.

Leit found that letting go, albeit connected to surrender, means submitting concerns and issues to a higher authority – the Higher Power or God (2022). Letting go is associated with surrendering obsessions and overthinking to God and letting Him to handle them. Surrender and letting go show that an individual submits their insecurities into God Box, hoping to let go and cease suffering (Leit, 2022). Based on the diverse perspectives of submitting to God Box, letting go is a shift in one’s emotional perception of the problems of obsession and overthinking. Leit finds that letting go means “shift in emotions... in order to improve well-being,” “accepting a decision to have peace,” “awareness of helplessness and need to improve,” and “a drift away from the prevailing challenges because the Higher Power would take care of them.” (Leit, 2022).

These experiences reflect different reasons why God Box is a “physical gateway” upon which individuals can turn their obsessions and overthinking hoping that Higher Power takes them over.

## Comparison Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness and meditation have been explored as a means to suppress overthinking and obsession. Marlatt and Kristeller described that mindfulness and meditation involves focusing on an issue that if anything pops up to interrupt, the individual still returns to the issue (Marlatt & Kristeller, 1999). This process helps an individual to overcome powers of mental, emotional, and physical habits –overthinking and obsession. Also, once an individual cedes overthinking or obsession, their minds become free, and calm and spacious (Batchelor, 2011). This perspective matches the process of God Box, especially when individuals wholly submit to the God Box and Higher Power.

In addition, meditation thrives on four important fronts that makes it essential in overcoming obsession and overthinking. Meditation requires an individual to practice conditions that allow the negative states that have not emerged to remain in their state and let go of negative feelings whenever they emerge. Also, an individual should demonstrate conditions that allow only positive states to emerge, as well as sustain those positive states that have arisen (Zollars et al., 2019). While this philosophy works in some cases, it ignores the reality about overthinking and obsession. In most cases, overthinking and obsessions naturally emerge, so rendering a means to stop them from occurring is farce. At the same time, it is not possible to focus on changing the negative vibes into positive vibes by merely emphasizing the awareness of the body as a way to draw the negative thoughts. Batchelor argued that an individual can only be encouraged to “explore, accept and let go of their negative feelings and thoughts, and recognize and build on good feelings (2011, p. 160)

## Criticisms and Limitations of God Box

The act of turning to God Box is closely associated with spiritualism. God Box is merely a physical portal that has no impact without spiritual belief in Higher Power. This means that God Box cannot be used independently to avert overthinking and obsession, rather an individual must consider that turning to God Box is a spiritual process that requires belief in Higher Power (Leit, 2022). Also, prayer is considered an integral part of the whole process because whenever an individual submits written notes of their problems they pray that Higher Power takes away obsession or overthinking (Leit, 2022). Furthermore, dedication and commitment to God Box is sustained by faith in Higher Power. The belief that things will work according to plan whenever a problem is submitted to a God Box demonstrates the essence of faith. While emotional and spiritual strength obtained from Higher Power require utmost dedication centered on faith, turning to Higher Power enables an individual to endure challenges hoping that they will submit them into the God Box and get relief (Leit, 2022). In other words, without commitment and dedication by the individual, using God Box as a physical portal that demonstrates connection to Higher Power may have no impact on well-being. Therefore, individuals suffering from obsession and overthinking can only get the desired relief if they have a genuine connection to Higher Power, so that whenever they submit written notes of their problems to God Box, they experience an improvement in well-being. Although using God Box can be challenging to some people due to aspects of spiritualism, prayer, and faith that define it, it is an alternative solution to overcome overthinking and obsession. It deliberately engages the individual in pursuing change they desire without the influence of third parties, as the case with therapies and meditation. Turning to God Box thrives on a personal belief that recurrent thoughts and ideas can be overcome by acknowledging that a Higher Power can provide calm and peace if sources of overthinking and obsession are written down on a piece of paper and submitted to God Box. Therefore, any individual should not be limited by inference to spiritualism and faith, rather focus on the positive outcomes of turning overthinking and obsessions to God Box.

## Application of God Box in Practice

In light of benefits of using God Box, individuals experiencing obsessive thoughts and overthinking should consider God Box an immediate remedy. Some of the instances when God Box can be effective is when grappling with family tussles or marriage challenges. Individuals should only sit back and reflect on their negative experience, identify and write down the problems and submit to God Box. Nothing is as satisfying as accepting that they have the impetus to initiate their healing by simply writing and submitting to God Box (in hopes of relief).

Regardless of the circumstance an individual faces, acknowledging the challenges and writing them down is the initial step in the healing process. In other words, God Box can be used in every situation whether it is illness, fear, wishing loved ones well, it is a tool for revitalizing self-belief and claiming benefits of selfless living.

Having situated the relevance of God Box in an individual's life, it is important to acknowledge that turning to God Box is essential to their well-being. Individuals can incorporate God Box in their daily lives by continuously connecting to Higher Power via prayer. Prayer is a sign of spiritual connection to Higher Power, which is a spiritual being ready to help submissive individuals have a satisfying life. Also, an individual can walk around with a pen and paper writing causes of debilitating episodes in their lives and submitting them to God Box in belief that cede existing in their minds.

## Summary

God Box as a tool for overcoming overthinking and obsession. The reverent use God Box in overcoming negative experiences such as obsession and overthinking makes it applicable in diverse milieu to promote happiness. As a physical portal, God Box allows can turn in written notes about the causes of their problems to Higher Power, which underscores the spiritualism dimension of the process. The centrality of Higher Power in the healing process demonstrates that an individual must maintain a close connection with the tool and diligently use it to get a breakthrough. Turning to God Box with the written notes about problems is a deliberate decision to let go and improve well-being. Letting go of overthinking and obsession is a substitutionary process aimed at replacing bad with better experiences, whereby it means submitting concerns and issues to a higher authority – the Higher Power or God. Letting go is a shift in one's emotional perception of the problems of obsession and overthinking. Though meditation can also suppress overthinking and obsession, an individual must demonstrates conditions that allow positive states to emerge and sustain those positive states, which is impractical where overthinking and obsession automatically occur. Using God Box is a spontaneous process that is effective in realizing behavior change, especially in regard to suppressing obsession and overthinking.

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