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Practical STRATEGIES TO RELIEVE YOUR OVERWHELM

(From a clinical psychologist)



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DO YOU CRAVE CALM?

Do you experience frequent overwhelm? You aren't alone. Feeling like everything is too much, experiencing intense emotions, brain fog, worry, tearfulness, helplessness are a few of many signs of overwhelm.

For some people it is simply that too many demands have been placed on them, life is crazy and it is just too much. For others we can find ourselves taking on too much in a quest to prove that we are competent, that we are worthy. If deep down you struggle with feeling good enough you may spend your time trying to prove it wrong "If I don't achieve all of this, then I have failed, I am a failure".

You may feel you have to earn the right to relax and switch off.

Do you have an idea of all the things that you **MUST** do to be a good mum or perhaps things you feel you **HAVE** to be in order to be successful at your job or in your relationship?

You might have that self-critical 'gremlin' chipping away at you all the time to spur you on and stop you becoming 'complacent', 'lazy', or 'arrogant'.

There are many things that we can do to prevent this but here we start with a few simple exercises to help you release the overwhelm & move forward with a little more calm.

CREATE SPACE

1. *Get Grounded*

When we are overwhelmed we get lost in the fog. Our emotional systems take over and the bit that helps us stay focussed, plan, sequence and be logical takes a back seat & gets swept up in the storm of emotions. The first step to switch it back on is to ground yourself. The good news is you can do this in as little as 30 seconds. Follow this [link](#) for a great exercise to help you slow down interrupt the internal storm and reconnect to the present moment.



2. *Get rid of the noise*

Are you getting caught up worrying about things that are outside your control or that haven't happened yet? "what if I don't get it done" "What if they don't like it" "What if they are late". Learning how to distinguish between what we a) can control b) can influence and c) what is out of our control, can help us focus on the tasks or areas we can do something about. The rest is just noise. Check in with each item - is it noise or can you action it?



CLEAR THE DECKS

3. *Want vs Need*

We often mix up our wants and needs when we are busy or overwhelmed which creates a massive to do list. Make a separate 'want' and 'need' list. Then (here is the important bit) take a moment to revisit it. It isn't clear cut. You may have put "I need to make lasagne for the children" in reality is it that you *need* to feed your children, you *want* to make lasagne? Could you make something easier? "I *want* to do some exercise" in reality is it that you *need* to make time for you to recharge and look after yourself so you can cope better with your other demands? This step can be super helpful in refining your to-do's but is essential if you have perfectionistic or people pleasing tendencies



4. *Stop multi-tasking!*

It is tempting when we are overwhelmed to try and multitask to get stuff done. However, what we know is that multitasking is just rapid attention switching which actually promotes the stress hormones and causes more fatigue and overwhelm. Try batching or chunking your tasks – do all your emails together, paying bills in one batch, tasks for one project or client at work in one go. It can help to set a time limit to each 'batch' before taking a break.



CALM THE CRITIC



5. Watch out for the Gremlin

Be prepared for your 'gremlin' to show up and try to derail you. Our brain's go-to mode is problem finding. It's job is to keep us safe by looking for threats. When we are busy our brain will be primed to tell us how we aren't going to get it all done, or that things will go wrong or that we are doing it the wrong way.

If you struggle with self-worth it might tell you that you are a failure if you don't get everything perfect.

It may say this, but it doesn't mean it is true and most importantly it usually isn't helpful. Here is a strategy to approach this:

- Be prepared! Expect it to show up because this is what brains do (not because you are failing)
- Give this part of your brain a name (you'll notice I called it a gremlin but you go with whatever you like).
- Try to notice your brain doing it's thing & thank it "thanks brain, I know you are doing your job but I don't need to hear this right now".
- Now be clear what you are going to re-focus on and say it (in your head or outloud)
- The more aware you are that it will show up and say unhelpful stuff, the easier it is to get space from it.

I hope you find these strategies useful.

Try not to judge yourself for how you feel or when you struggle. This only increases the distress. Feeling overwhelmed is a challenging place to be, but it is also really common.

You can move through it.

Try one thing at a time - start with number one and keep practicing.



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