



Three Ways to Stop Feeling Overwhelmed Today

Here is my guide to three strategies you can employ today to stop feeling overwhelmed.

1. Control the Narrative

You bump into a friend and colleague whom you haven't seen in a while. They ask you: "How are you?", and you answer "Busy!". You think you're just stating a fact, conveying the news. We've all had this conversation hundreds of times.

But the language we use to describe our lives matters (a lot!). I recommend you never think of yourself as "busy" again. There is no upside to thinking this way, and you are much more likely to feel overwhelmed when you tell yourself that you are very "busy".

In addition, our brain loves to be right. If we tell ourselves that we are busy, our brain is going to delight in showing us all the ways that this is true. That is all that we will see. A feeling of overwhelm ensues.

Try this experiment. Say this sentence to yourself: "I have a lot of things to do." Now try this one: "I have things to do." What about this one: "I have things that I choose to do." Notice how there is a much greater weight and undercurrent of urgency to the first version. "Things" are totally doable. "A lot of things" is a problem. "Making a choice" is empowering.

And what is "a lot" anyway? To me, it might be 3 things. To someone else, it might be 10 things. The only way that anyone gets anything done is pretty much one task at a time, regardless.

So, be very intentional about what narrative you create about your time and your "to do" list.

2. Decide to Do Less

I bet you thought that I would have tips for you on how to get more things done in less time. Wrong!

Apply your critical thinking skills to how you spend your time. Ask yourself the following:

- Am I spending the most time on the things that are the most important to me? If not, how can I shift the balance?
- Where can I ask for help and what can I delegate?
- Where can I spend money to create time?
- Which tasks require A+ effort, and where is B- perfectly adequate?
- What tasks can only I do? (For example, only I can take my body to the gym.)
- What tasks can I stop doing altogether?
- Where am I saying "yes" when the answer should be "no"?

Look at everything that you are doing and why; and start doing less.

3. Focus on Creating Results

Here's a scenario you might be able to relate to.....You have something you have to write for work. You put time aside in your calendar, but when the time comes, you don't feel inspired. You procrastinate by reorganizing the top drawer of your desk. Then you scroll through your social media accounts on your phone. Next, you make some tea and grab a snack. Then you answer some email. Then you do a little internet shopping. Now time's up, and you haven't written a thing. You beat yourself up mentally, and it sounds something like this: "OMG, how did I let this happen? I totally screwed up. Now, what am I going to do? I'm out of time. How am I going to get this thing written?" You feel the pressure and become overwhelmed. Sound familiar?

I have news for you: nothing has gone wrong. You fell into this trap because you have a human brain. **Our brain always prefers to take the path of least resistance.** It's hard to use brain power to write something original. It is so much easier to consume or procrastinate than to create.

Knowing this, we can predict ahead of time that we won't feel inspired when the time comes to do a task. We learn to expect that our brain will offer us the erroneous thought that procrastination is a good idea. **We can anticipate what will happen and be prepared.**

But there is a simple brain hack that you can use. You can trick your brain by focusing on the end result. **Our brains love accomplishment.** You build motivation and momentum for yourself by imagining how **amazing** it will feel to have created the result of the completed document. Think of how much brain space you will free up when you no longer have to stress over getting this document written! I personally *love* the feeling of being "on top of my stuff".

The antidote to procrastination is to focus on the accomplishment that comes from creating the end result.

Want to Learn More?

If you need help applying these strategies in your own life or would like to learn more, please reach out to me: nadira@nadiranarainemd.com

If you are ready to take your time management to the next level, book a free coaching session [here](#).