Overwhelmed? These 10 Techniques Can Help You Cope With Uncomfortable Feelings.



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Whether if it’s finical insecurity, relationship problems, or work that is too demanding, stress is a normal part of life. But, what happens when the stress intensifies and builds-up appearing to be no longer manageable? You may begin to feel like you’re submerged underwater.

Feeling overwhelmed can be paralyzing. It can also cause negative emotions like anger and anxiety. Other symptoms include depression, tension headaches, panic headaches, and isolation. As of that weren’t enough, feeling overwhelmed can lead to unhealthy habits like poor diet and odd sleeping

patterns.

Suffice to say, this isn't good for your productivity, relationships, and health. As such, you need to be able to be aware of this feeling and accept that you are going to have to do something. You will have to manage this stress differently than you have before – especially if you are an entrepreneur.

You can use the following 11 techniques to help you manage these uncomfortable feelings.

1. Drop the ball

There's definitely a negative association with the term "dropping the ball." After all, it's a sign that you either made a mistake or didn't live up to your responsibilities. However, Tiffany Dufu, author of *Drop the Ball: Achieving More by Doing Less*, has a different perspective.

Dufu states that she was "the poster girl for doing it all." But, following the birth of her first child, she realized that she couldn't achieve all of her personal and professional goals. Her solution? Focus on what truly matters and let go of the rest.

That's easier said than done, of course, but you can use the 4Ds method to help you identify your priorities.

1. **Delete.** Eliminate all personal and professional commitments that aren't important or necessary
2. **Delegate.** Anything that's important, but not worth your time, should be assigned to someone else.
3. **Defer.** For tasks that you need to do, but aren't urgent, schedule them for when you have the availability.
4. **Do.** Whatever is important and urgent should be done ASAP.

If that doesn't work for you, try out the Tim Ferriss method. Ask, "What are the 20 percent of activities or people that are

producing 80 percent or more of the results and positive emotional states that I want?”

Next, ask, “What are the 20 percent of activities, responsibilities or people that are producing 80 percent or more of the pain, the headache, and the negative emotional states that I would prefer not to have?” And, follow that with, “What would this be like if it was easy?

2. Take a timeout

If you’re a parent, then you’re well aware of timeouts. Both you and your child need these to cool down and gather your thoughts. And while it may seem awkward, you can do the same thing whenever you feel overwhelmed.

Remove yourself emotionally or physically by reading, meditating, exercising or going for a walk. The reason? It separates you from the problem, gives you a chance to clear your head and puts things into perspective.

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3. Build and preserve better boundaries

Boundaries are essential in maintaining a healthy and balanced life. They can also be used to alleviate stress by preventing you from spreading yourself too thin. And, while it takes some practice, boundaries are easy to build if you do the following:

- Know your limitations.
- Tune into your feelings.
- Be direct and honest.
- Give yourself permission to say “no.”

- Practice self-awareness.
- Have healthy, reciprocal relationships.
- Make self-care a priority.
- Seek support.
- Be assertive.

I'd also add that you can use time-blocking. If your time is already scheduled, it's much easier to say "no" and maintain boundaries. Moreover, you can add blocks of free time to make your schedule flexible in case something pops up.

4. Stop overthinking and take action

Dale Carnegie once said, "Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer fear, do not sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy."

But, how is that possible when you're swamped and stressed out? Well, just do something. Anything. Often a chance will be as good as a rest. Try it!

That may sound counterproductive. But, the idea is to not get hung up on everything that you need to. Instead, just get started on a to-do-list item to gain momentum.

It's kind of like the trope where a character in a TV show spins a globe to decide where to move or go on vacation. Wherever their finger lands, that's their destination. You could do something by just closing your eyes and dropping a finger on your list. Whatever you land on, that's where your focus will be.

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5. Procrastinate

Wait a minute? Didn't I just suggest that you take action? I did.

But, you should occasionally embrace procrastination. Research shows that it can spark creativity. Also, as the great Adam Grant points out in a *New York Times* piece, Frank Lloyd Wright, Steve Jobs and Aaron Sorkin were all known for procrastinating.

Of course, you don't want this to become destructive. The concept is that for some tasks, it's alright to let your mind wander and thing as opposed to forcing yourself to work.

6. Let go of perfection

In no way am I advocating that you phone it in – whether that be at work or home. My argument is that you let go of being perfect. If you don't drop perfection – you'll be punching your ticket to "Stressvile."

Perfectionism can cause you to miss deadlines and make many errors. It's also a huge drain on your energy. Both of these can wreck your reputation and productivity, which in turn harms your well-being.

Most importantly, it's simply impossible to be perfect. A better alternative is to think done instead of perfect. Besides combating the negatives that come with perfection, you'll get a dopamine rush whenever you finish what you started.

7. Write it down or talk it out

I'm a big advocate of writing. Besides getting pestering thoughts out of my head, it also allows me to brainstorm solutions and reflect. Studies have also found that writing

about emotions may ease stress and trauma since it lets you organize and give meaning to your thoughts.

If that doesn’t help, talk to your support system like your significant other or best friend. Venting productively gets things off your chest. Even better, venting (carefully) provides an opportunity for you to discuss ways to solve a problem.

8. Automate, delegate or outsource

Don’t hesitate in reaching out to your friends, family, colleagues, or neighbors whenever you need help. You may feel like a nuisance. But, it’s in our DNA to want to give back to others.

Just remember to be considerate. If they decline your request, don’t take it personally or make them guilty. And, if they assist you, make sure to return the favor down the road.

What if you don’t have anyone around to offload your work? Consider outsourcing some of your less important tasks to a freelancer. Or, use tools that allow you to automate tedious and repetitive tasks.

9. Don’t believe the myth of multitasking

Sure. When it comes to tasks that aren’t challenging, like folding the laundry while on the phone, multitasking may work. But, when it comes to more cognitively challenging activities, the human brain isn’t capable of doing more than one thing at a time.

In fact, doing things simultaneously doesn’t just interfere with your productivity. It can damage your brain. Instead, embrace single-tasking.

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10. Question “big assumptions”

Big assumptions, according to Harvard professors Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey, are “deeply rooted beliefs about” yourself and the world around you. “These assumptions put an order to the world and at the same time suggest ways in which the world can go out of order.”

For example, let’s say that an employee came to you with a problem. Unfortunately, you don’t have a solution. As a consequence, you may believe that you’re not qualified enough to be a business owner. But that’s erroneous thinking – don’t make these erroneous connections in your mind.

Obviously, big errors in thinking can become overwhelming – even though it isn’t 100 percent accurate. Kagan and Lahey recommend that you identify and debunk these big assumptions.

Identifying the thinking error and practicing correct principles is a process that won’t happen overnight. Eventually, though, you’ll feel less vanquished and you’ll retain a finer sense of control.

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