

# OVERCOMING OVERWHELM

Guidebook



LIMITLESS

# Overcoming Overwhelm

One of the biggest breakthroughs in behavioral science in the last century is that events don't cause stress. Rather, stress is caused by the meaning we give to the events, or any other response. In simple terms, stress, overwhelm and other negative feelings are not a result of events. Rather, they are a direct result of the conversations you have with the voices in your head.

For many, stress and its more intense cousin, overwhelm, are a common state. In fact, the latest studies<sup>1</sup> show we spend a majority of our time in a stress state. Add to this internal state the extreme and intense stressful situations that happen outside of daily life, such as major market downturns, global events and other stress-inducing events, and it is clear why many people struggle to release themselves from overwhelm.

In order to build a wildly successful business and life you love, you must learn to *break the cycle of overwhelm* and free yourself from negative patterns and thoughts.

Breaking the cycle involves reaching important milestones that will take you from awareness to achievement on your path toward high-performance happiness. As you work toward achieving and experiencing all the success you can envision, first, become aware of where you currently are, then begin the process of deepening your self-understanding through analysis and, finally, act on your good intentions. This process allows you to disrupt overwhelm in your life and then develop tools to do something different. Equally important is cultivating a plan to stay out of overwhelm in the future.



1. Dr. Chatterjee, Ranga. *The Stress Solution: The 4 Steps to a Calmer, Happier, Healthier You*. Penguin Books, 2018.

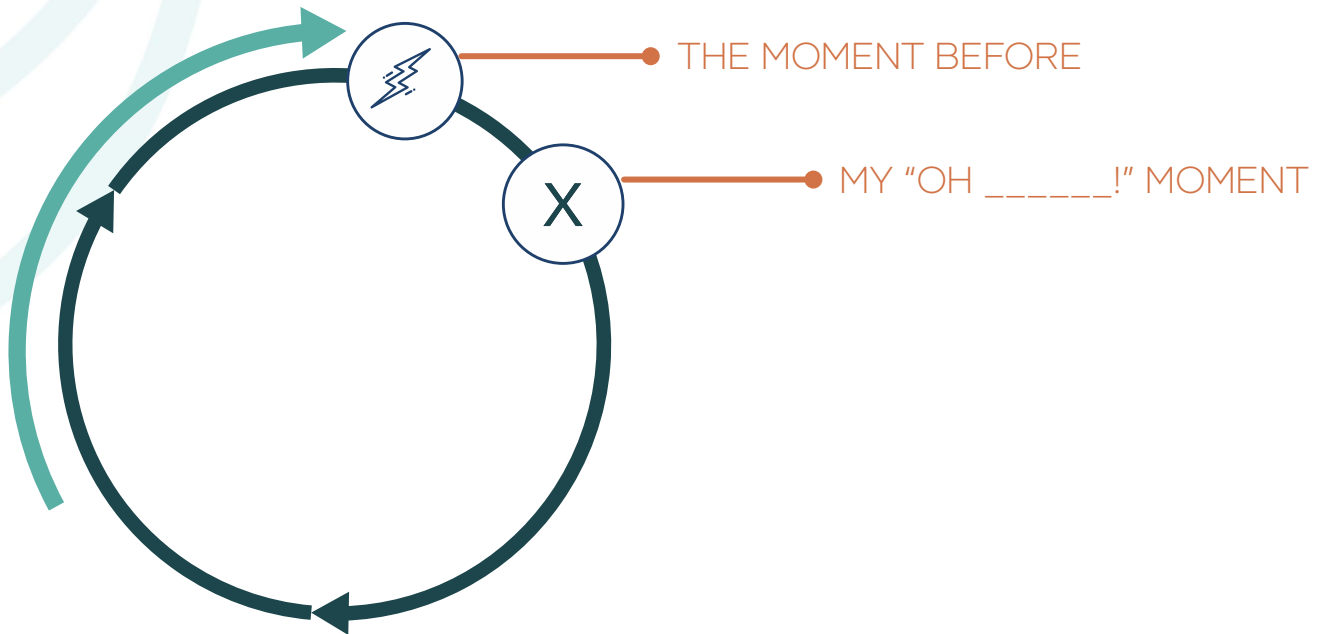


# From Overwhelm to Overflow



## AWARENESS

First, become aware of what you know and what you don't (easier said than done!). Use the Overcoming Overwhelm Exercise to identify where you are at on the overwhelm scale, as well as assess what makes you feel overwhelmed. Often, we do not realize we are continually in a state of overwhelm because we accept this as a normal and natural state. Simply becoming aware of when we are overwhelmed—identifying that trigger immediately prior to your "Oh \_\_\_\_\_! Moment"—is one of the most helpful tools in our arsenal against overwhelm.



## ANALYSIS

When working toward change, it is also important to recognize any back stories that are creating and keeping overwhelm at hand. The "facts" of our lives are often enmeshed in judgements, beliefs, fears and "shoulds" that are not based in reality. We give you permission to eliminate "should" from your vocabulary! Your "overwhelm story" usually lives in the past or the future, is not fact-based, doesn't set you up to win and is designed to protect you...but usually doesn't! Identifying these back stories often begins with asking yourself questions about your current belief system. Ask yourself, do you believe being successful means being busy every moment of the day? Do you feel that asking for and hiring others to help is a sign of weakness? Do you fear looking back at your life and feeling like you did not accomplish enough? Identify the thoughts that create a pattern of overwhelm in your life, and pinpoint the causes behind your current state.

Some reasons we are overwhelmed may include:

- o We feel pressure and are constantly expected to do more with less.
- o We haven't evolved as much as technology has—we are not computers and need time to recharge/rejuvenate between tasks.
- o Technology has changed expectations for responsiveness; everything is more immediate.



- o The complexity and volume of digital messaging takes up tremendous space in our brain. Not only are we dealing with a tremendous volume of content, we are using our brains in biologically different ways, which can be tiresome.
- o We are exposed to substantially more stressful images in the world around us on a global level.
- o We feel more out of control as a society and individually.
- o We are used to constantly living in a state of stress.

Finally, take a moment to identify what overwhelm feels like in your body, which might manifest itself in ways like tight shoulders, a pit in your stomach, or being short-tempered with family and friends.



## ACTION

Next, identify your current strategies for dealing with overwhelm. Do you simply power through? Work longer hours? Deny that there is an issue, even when family members and friends note it? Try to multi-task and hope you grow arms sooner rather than later?

Instead, identify genuine and realistic tools that will help you when you find you are currently in a state of overwhelm. The most important action you can take is to STOP and notice you are in overwhelm. The following actions are then incredibly useful to stop overwhelm in the moment:

- o Breathe (first and often)
- o Get out in nature, recalibrate
- o Walk around
- o Sit in a different space
- o Take a break
- o Do one easy thing
- o Keep OMM lists (On My Mind)
- o Put your phone in airplane mode
- o Identify the story that's got you
- o Ask for help
- o Identify what boundaries are missing or need to be put in place
- o Focus on progress not perfection
- o Clean your desk

Next, begin to practice better and more consistent self-care, such as sleeping at least 7 hours each night, exercising 3-5 times a week, meditating daily, eating well, disconnecting from TV, wine, screens, etc. and drinking more water.

Finally, to avoid the pit of potential future overwhelm:

- o Say "no" more than you say "yes"
  - o As Derek Sivers says, it's either a "hell yeah!" or a "hell no"
- o Track your time for a week
- o Use weekly and annual calendars
- o Delegate or outsource all but revenue-producing activities
- o Check emails on a limited basis, use tools like Boomerang and SaneBox
- o Be realistic about what you can do in a day
- o Take steps to improve your focus and productivity (see Power of Productivity Lesson)





## ACHIEVEMENT

Continue your personal best-practices to stop the overwhelm cycle before it starts, and cultivate your ability to recognize the moment before your personal "Oh \_\_\_\_! Moment". Give yourself permission to break the cycle and to step away from any limiting beliefs that keep you stuck. Embrace boundaries, allow yourself to be present in the current moment instead of the past or future, and manage your energy to maximize your success.



# Overcoming Overwhelm Resources

The below are some available processes, worksheets and samples you can implement to maximize your energy and minimize overwhelm in your life.

EDITABLE VERSIONS ARE AVAILABLE.

## Overcoming OVERWHELM

Identifying where you are on the overwhelm scale is an important first step in getting out of an overwhelm state. Determine what level of overwhelm you experience on a regular basis, and also what causes you to feel that way. Identifying the reason or story behind your overwhelm is also important, as this is the story that creates the overwhelm in the first place. This conversation in your head changes a long list of "to dos" or a lot of moving parts into OVERWHELM. Finally, identify how overwhelm feels in your physical body.

- On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 low/10 high, please rate your experience of following
  - I easily get overwhelmed. \_\_\_\_\_
  - I regularly get overwhelmed. \_\_\_\_\_
  - I identify as a perfectionist. \_\_\_\_\_
  - I hold higher standards for myself than I would for anyone else. \_\_\_\_\_
- I feel overwhelmed because...
- My story about this is...
- To me, overwhelm feels like...

## Well Being: Plan

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>PHYSICAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sleep</li> <li>Water</li> <li>Proper diet</li> <li>Hygiene</li> <li>Appearance</li> <li>Stretch</li> <li>Breathe</li> <li>Aerobic exercise</li> <li>Anaerobic exercise</li> <li>Outdoors</li> <li>Dental</li> <li>Time off</li> <li>Restoration</li> </ul> | <p><b>MENTAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading</li> <li>Education</li> <li>Puzzles/games</li> <li>Challenges</li> <li>Conversation</li> <li>Creativity</li> <li>Art/music</li> <li>Culture</li> <li>Growth</li> <li>Values</li> <li>Integrity</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>RELATIONSHIP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service</li> <li>Authentic sharing</li> <li>Relatedness</li> <li>Communication</li> <li>Responsibility</li> <li>Listening</li> </ul>   | <p><b>SPIRITUAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prayer</li> <li>Meditation</li> <li>Fellowship</li> <li>Reading</li> <li>Intuition</li> <li>Gratitude</li> <li>Church</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>PARENTING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Success</li> <li>Role identification</li> <li>Measures</li> <li>Alignment</li> <li>Smart goals</li> <li>Resources</li> <li>Time off &amp; on</li> </ul>   | <p><b>WHERE ELSE DO YOU NEED TO LOOK?</b></p>   |

Goals based in values  
in action on plans

## The Overwhelm CYCLE

THE MOMENT BEFORE

MY "OH \_\_\_\_\_!" MOMENT

The things I tell myself in this moment are:

What happens for me just before is:

Tools I'll use when I notice I'm in overwhelm:

Tools I'll use to be overwhelm resistant:

What's possible for me in a life with 50% less overwhelm?