

## Overwhelm-Busting Strategies



Symptoms of overwhelm can be physical (nail biting, clumsiness, neck ache); psychological (forgetfulness, rudeness, defensiveness); social (poor hygiene, inadequate boundaries); or spiritual (loss of sense of purpose, unsure of what's important).

Its triggers are just as individual: a deadline, a certain tone of voice, change.

Noticing these symptoms and triggers is like setting off the two-minute warning buzzer—giving you time to implement your proven intervention techniques.

### The Strategies

Write down all the nurturing things you can think of to do when overwhelm begins to visit. They'll help you reconnect with yourself, to re-collect and re-focus your energy inside. Keep a copy with you and one at home. When you begin to notice your particular symptoms and/or triggers, use the list to remind yourself of things that have worked in the past. Here are just a few suggestions. Be as creative as you want.

- Breathe. Remember the breath's metaphor: Let in; let go.
- Wrap up in a blanket. Cuddle a doll.
- Dance alone, with or without music. Let your body lead the way.
- Listen to violin, cello or piano music. Let the music elicit tears.
- Light a candle. Maybe it's one small candle at your work desk or lots of candles around your house.
- Watch a funny video. Laughter has a positive effect on brain chemistry.
- Ask for help. It's a gift that allows others the opportunity to give.
- Go for a walk. Exercise increases adrenaline and endorphins, the body's natural antidepressants.
- Lie on the grass outside. Connect with the earth's regenerating powers.

- Go to your room—or your car—and sing to yourself. Or hum quietly as you work.
- Sit on a dock and watch the water ebb and flow. It will calm your heart and limbic brain (emotional brain) and allow your neocortex (the part of your brain that utilizes logic and reasoning) to engage.

### **Practices**

A practice of any kind can keep you tethered to yourself in those times when overwhelm wants to scatter your energy to the wind. Regularly repeated, these practices are best cultivated in times when things are going well so that they are there to sustain you when you get overwhelmed. Some examples:

- Say a small prayer, read a meditation book or recite a poem each morning to greet the day.
- Walk the dog while whispering all the things for which you forgive yourself.
- Write in a journal as fast as you can for 15 minutes first thing in the morning without editing or judging. Pour it all out on paper.
- Do the “Salute to the Sun” yoga postures every morning after arising.

### **Things to do today:**

1. Inhale
2. Exhale
3. Inhale
4. Exhale
5. Inhale
6. Exhale

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