

A grayscale photograph of a person with curly hair, seen from behind, standing on a rocky outcrop. They are wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt with "PRO COMBAT" on the collar, dark shorts, and sneakers with socks. The background is a vast, hazy landscape under a cloudy sky.

SIMPLE 4-STEP STRATEGY
& DAILY CHECKLIST

HOW TO BEAT OVERWHELM

MAINTAIN CLARITY AND TAKE BACK CONTROL OF YOUR DAY

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Why You Are Overwhelmed

Overwhelm always starts when you decide what to do while trying to do it.

When you are on a mission, you temporarily switch your body out of autopilot mode. In manual mode, your body needs an explicit instruction from your mind in the form of an intention and decision.

Your body will get confused and can't work effectively when your mind is indecisive.

Feeling overwhelmed is most often a symptom of indecisiveness. In my coaching practice, I have often noticed that people who experience overwhelm also have difficulty with focus.

Why? Because attention requires commitment. Without a decision, there is no commitment, and without commitment, there is no focus.

Humans are a meaning machine; we give meaning to everything we do. Meaning is our natural way to process our experience.

The mechanical aspects of our operation—such as changes in heart rate, blood pressure, breath, hormones, muscle tension, and sensations in our body—are processed by our mind through the meaning we create and emotion we feel.

We respond to the world around us through the lenses of our ideas. They construct our inner world and become the foundation of our attitudes.

These ideas include the inner narrative we tell ourselves about who we think we are and how we want others to perceive us.

If you suffer from feeling overwhelmed and frequently find yourself unable to make decisions, check the inner narrative you're telling yourself.

The two most common inner narratives I encounter with my clients through coaching are:

1. FEAR OF DISAPPOINTING PEOPLE

Surprisingly, this narrative is often found in high achievers who have the can-do-it-all reputation.

The fear of disappointing others makes them very reluctant to say no. Admitting mistakes or expressing that what people ask of them is beyond their current capacity is something that they considered to be a defeat.

The pressure to do things perfectly is not only very stressful but also can make a person want to run away from doing the task at hand. When you try to move forward but encounter resistance that pulls you back, indecisiveness and feelings of overwhelm might start to creep in.

2. "I AM NOT GOOD ENOUGH"

When you unconsciously believe that you are not good enough, you tend to think everything you do and its outcome are not in your control.

You are what you tolerate. When you think you don't deserve what you want, you live in a condition you don't deserve.

It may sound weird because, for some people, being overwhelmed may feel like home. It brings familiarity and reinforces the very thing you believe is true: that you are not good enough.

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You could be overwhelmed as a parent, trying to juggle so many different things, and deep down you feel inadequate for your children.

You could be overwhelmed as an executive who just got promoted to a new role, and deep down you doubt your ability to take on the new responsibilities.

You could be a business owner who is overwhelmed by the uncertainty of taking your business to a new level, and deep down you feel you don't deserve to earn the success you desire.

THE WORLD WITHOUT RIGHT OR WRONG

These narratives unconsciously box us in, forcing us to think and operate from a place where everything we do is either right or wrong, as if there is a soul-sucking dragon that is waiting for us, ready to bite with its toxic and painful venom when we make a wrong move.

We feel overwhelmed because we think we must make the right choice at the right place, every time.

The soul-sucking dragon that feels so real is no more than our inner voice: the self-critics and judgment we impose on ourselves.

We forget life is also a playground.

Remember how creative we were, playing and moving upside down around the play structures in the park?

When you understand there is nothing that actually threatens your life when you choose to go for a walk or a run, decline or join a meeting, you are free to decide what feels right for you.

No matter how busy you are or how big of responsibility you must take on, when you insert fun and play to the occasion, you will no longer feel overwhelmed.

The Simple 4-Step Strategy



The Simple 4-Step Strategy to beat overwhelm and take control of your day.

STEP 1: PLAN & PREPARE

By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail—Benjamin Franklin

Imagine a surgeon who performs a bypass surgery. After he cuts his patient's body, he realizes that the other tools and equipment required for the next step are nowhere near him. What a disaster! Just how overwhelmed do you think he feels trying to perform his work without the tools he needs?

You too are performing daily operations. Perhaps, they are not as critical as what a surgeon does, but the success of and how smooth the operation you have will depend on your plan and preparation.

Abraham Lincoln said, "Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first four to sharpening the axe."

Can you imagine chopping a tree with a dull axe?

When you go to war, you don't just grab your weapon and start marching; instead, you would plan the best strategy and prepare the logistics first.

As soon as you wake up until you go to sleep, you are in a battle: the battle of priorities and distractions.

If you don't plan your day, circumstances will. If you don't have an agenda, somebody else will make you follow theirs. If you don't draw a clear boundary beforehand, the boundary will not become clear until you already feel pressured and overwhelmed.

Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now—Alan Lakein

Always plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark—Richard Cushing

Plan for what is difficult while it is easy, do what it is great while it is small—Sun Tze

STEP 2: DECIDE WITH DETERMINATION

You cannot make progress without making decisions—Jim Rohn

If you are the type of person who makes plans but hardly ever executes them, you miss one step in between—you must decide.

Simply writing down your plan will not make you automatically

execute your plan. You must decide to either do it or not do it. Before you make a decision to act, goals or a to-do list are just wishful thinking.

The same thing applies when you say "I'll try..." or "I think I will..."; your mind tricks you into thinking that it's doing its work now when, in fact, it's not.

The more decisions you put off, the more overwhelmed you will feel.

A decision is a closure from your thinking mind that signals your body and subconscious mind to do the actual work.

Without a decision, you are forced to use your willpower. As we all know, willpower only lasts until it gets exhausted, which happens more easily than you might think.

The best source of energy for a decision is your why power.

Do you deeply understand why you do what you do? Or do you do certain things because someone told you to?

When you know your core values, understand why you must do what you do, and are deeply connected to those reasons, it'll be easy for you to set priorities and make decisions.

Nothing happens until you decide. Make a decision and watch your life move forward—Oprah Winfrey

STEP 3: DO THINGS WITH COMMITMENT

Doing is not enough.

In the era of constant distractions, we have developed a distinctive trait that our ancestors didn't have: a short attention span.

The boon of freedom, endless options, and the abundance of information have slowed down our ability to process decisions. While technology progresses at a speed that people in the past couldn't ever imagine before, the brain—our operating system—hasn't had an upgrade since the caveman era.

So, what do we do? We try to hack the time necessary to filter our options by activating our monkey brain and desensitizing our sensory system; we think we move faster by multitasking.

If Homo Sapiens from 200,000 years ago still lived now, they would classify us as a shallow breather tribe: a tribe that consists of people with physiological signs of shallow breath, anxiety over non-life-threatening objects, and frequently suffering from stiff necks and back pain.

No wonder we get overwhelmed. We do one thing while thinking of other things to do. We can't even wait until we finish exhaling and squeezing all the air from our lung before we inhale, leaving only a tiny capacity for oxygen to be transported to our oxygen-deprived brain.

Try this: For 60 seconds, breathe with full commitment.

Done? Did you find yourself more focused on each breath you took, inhaling and exhaling deeply, and did you experience pleasant synchronicity between your body and your mind?

If a commitment can change the way you breathe, imagine how much it can change your life if you apply it to everything you do. From writing a proposal, listening to your client, and walking to eating and spending quality time with your loved ones.

Commitment is like a special armor that protects you from a constant barrage of distractions. This unique armor produces two magic powers that most people in the modern world lack: self-discipline and resilience.

Decision making is what gets you started; commitment is what gets you going.

STEP 4: RECALIBRATE WITH INTENTION

If you ask high achievers to do something for you, they'll willingly perform the task and deliver beyond your expectation. If you ask them to stop and rest, they may tell you that they don't really know how to relax. Unfortunately, it is only when they do more that they feel like they are achieving something.

Don't we often mistake movement with achievement?

After a sprint of doing, doing, doing, everybody needs rest and a fresh start.

Without taking time to rest, reflect, and readjust, we can quickly go off course.

Like a guitarist, you must tune the strings before you perform; otherwise, no matter how good you play, your tunes will be off.

Recalibration means clearing your perceptions, recovering your capacity to observe objectively, and aligning yourself with your true north so you can start fresh.

There is no magic pill for beating overwhelm and taking control of your life. Like eating and sleeping, you must recalibrate yourself daily.

Focus on the progress rather than the mistakes you make. Remind yourself of your own values, purpose, and the goals you want to achieve.

Do activities that give your energy rather than deplete it. Rest, eat well, exercise, meditate, pray, and journal.

Last but not least, recalibrate your imagination. Imagine who you'll be in three, five, and ten years. What kind of life and contribution do you want to provide? I call this "Imagineering": tapping into your imagination capability to engineer or to create.

That is how great creative minds create. James Dyson didn't invent Dyson No-Blade Air Multiplier Fan, by focusing on the limits and obstacles. He started by imagining a fan without rotating blades. He kept imagining it until he found a way to make it possible.

Imagination is the way you train your mind to see things as a possibility when the reality seems impossible.

Empty your glass before you fill it again with fresh water. Make every day a new beginning. Plan, decide, do with commitment, and recalibrate.

The Daily Checklist

This section has a list of mental and physical activities you can do to avoid overwhelm and be more in control of your day.

You may think this exercise will just take more of your time, but I can assure you that after you apply it, even partially, you'll have more time in your busy schedule. These are activities that increase energy.

Here are some thoughts before you apply the list to your daily routine:

- You must decide that this is something you want to do; otherwise, it will be hard to make time, commit and stick to.
- You must use a why power: for example, why the routine you are starting is good for you. The because-someone-told-me-so reason will never work.
- We tend to do new things better when we think they'll be easy, so try to apply an experimental mindset when incorporating a new routine. After all, you are just testing it. Commit to a two-week challenge just to see how it goes. If you experience the benefits, commit for another two weeks. Soon enough it will become a habit and you won't have to think about it.
- Do things in small increments. Pick one or two activities

that resonate with you, and schedule them on your calendar daily. Remember, whatever you fail to schedule is not important and won't get done.

- Incorporate more items from the following checklists as you go. Adjust and experiment until you build a strong routine that puts you into a peak state every day.

MORNING

☐ Morning Ritual (30-120 min)

The morning routine is your daily tonic, a reset and refresh button, a time to fill your gas tank and prepare your engine for the day's race. Don't miss it, especially if your day is filled with responsibilities to others. You need a time for yourself to calibrate.

Fill your morning ritual with these activities:

- Prayer/meditation
- Exercise
- Journaling
- Imagineering your future and what you intend to be today at work and for the people who are important to you.

☐ Review your daily plan and the priorities you created the night before (5 min)

DAY

☐ Know what is important for you and say 'NO' to what isn't.

Ask this question: If everything is taken away from me, what are the things that I am not willing to lose?

Your answer should be a list of whatever is the most important to you. Guard it, live by it, grow it. Set a boundary. Everything else is secondary.



In everything you do, decide before you do it.

Whether it be going to the washroom, picking up a phone call, choosing an apple instead of an orange, checking your Facebook page, DECIDE before you do it. Own your choice, including the choice to distract yourself. As long as you are aware that you are the one who decides to start, you also have the power to stop.

Do not let your choice run on autopilot. The key to being in control is to own your actions; know that you are the only one responsible for them.



Write down ideas or to-do items that come up during the day.

Don't let scattered thoughts continue to take a toll on your psyche. When ideas or things to do come up during the day, write them down to get them out of your head. You have a priority, and you can't do everything at once, so write it down. Defer it for another time. Make your mind know that you notice it, so it doesn't have to scream loud while you focus on your current task.



Check In (1 to 5 min each time)

After you complete a task, check in mentally and physically. What do you feel? Where are you now? A few deep breathes and a quick mindful scan of your body will help you to readjust your mental state before starting another task.

EVENING

☐ Reflection (5 min)

Review today's plan and write down answers to the following:

- What are you grateful for today?
- What did you do well today? List down your small wins.
- What do you want to do better tomorrow?

☐ Plan your next day (5-10 min)

- Review your goals
- Create a list of things to do.
- Pick and decide on three priorities.
Know why they are priorities for you and why you must complete them. Know that if you can only get three done tomorrow you will feel good and accomplished.
- Put a dedicated time slot in your calendar to complete the three priorities.

☐ Apply a device-free zone (1 hour)

☐ Have enough sleep. (7-8 hours)

If you have to wake up early, sleep early.

FINAL TIPS

- Schedule the checklist items you decide to do in your calendar daily.
- Consider finding a community or hiring a coach or mentor to reinforce your accountability and accelerate your growth rate.

DAILY RITUAL GENERATOR

Morning Ritual		Total Time
List your activities and estimate time for completion.		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Schedule each activity in your calendar.

Work Day Ritual		Total Time
List your activities and estimate time for completion.		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Schedule each activity in your calendar.

Evening Ritual		Total Time
List your activities and estimate time for completion.		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Schedule each activity in your calendar.

Daily Tracker						
Check off your progress.						
M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
M	T	W	Th	F	S	S

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M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
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M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
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M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
M	T	W	Th	F	S	S

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M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
M	T	W	Th	F	S	S

DAILY RITUAL WORKSHEET

Morning

Answer these questions in your journal.

1	What are you forever grateful about today?
2	How are you going to show up today no matter what your circumstances are?
3	Imagineering: Describe how your day would be like when you show up (refer to question #2)?
4	Review your today's calendar and priorities. Decide on which you are going to do.
5	
6	
7	

Day

Develop a habit of mindfulness one minute at a time.

1	Make a mindful decision before you start a task.
2	Carry out your intention and commit to what you are doing.
3	After completing a task, check in mentally and physically. What do you feel? Where are you now?
4	Take a 1-5 minutes break in between a task.
5	Write down ideas or to-do items that come up during the day.
6	
7	

Evening

Answer these questions in your journal and list down your action plan in a daily planner.

1	What did you do well today? List down your wins.
2	What worked well that you want to continue doing?
3	Check your calendar for tomorrow and list down your to do list.
4	Out of your to do items, what are the top three priorities? Why they are important for you?
5	What can you do better tomorrow?
6	
7	