

# How to Get Your Life Together When You Feel Overwhelmed

Everyone finds themselves wondering 'how to get my life together' from time to time. Overwhelm is a natural experience, and these tools can help you deal with it.

I felt emotionally flooded, and he could see it in my face. Before he could respond, I sighed, 'With everything going on in the world, I just want to watch 'Love Is Blind' on Netflix, eat chocolate recklessly, and nap like I'm training for a sleep competition.' I was certifiably overwhelmed and wondering how to get my life together.

There is no denying how overwhelmed we all are amidst global pandemics, natural disasters, political challenges, economic downturns, family drama, and work deadlines. It's enough to make anyone throw up their hands, jump in bed, and pull the covers over their head until 2030. Yet, every storm has an end, and you are strong enough to weather it.

When you are overwhelmed, you feel like things are too much to deal with. Put simply, there is an all-consuming sentiment that emotions are just too strong. Overwhelm can be situational or general.

Situational overwhelm is linked to a particular set of contingent circumstances, like when there is a big project due at work, but you are not sure if it will go well and your promotion is hanging in the balance. General overwhelm is linked to the everyday pressures of showing up for yourself and others. Regardless of which type of overwhelm you encounter, it can be a truly challenging ordeal.

Everyone gets overwhelmed from time to time. It is a natural part of life. Overwhelm doesn't have to upend your progress or thrust you into a downward spiral. In order to help you navigate these treacherous waters, here are some tips to help you get your life back together when you feel totally overwhelmed.<sup>[1]</sup>

## 1. Slow It Down

The first thing you need to do when you feel flooded or overwhelmed is to slow everything down. The sensation you are feeling is like an alarm. Your body and spirit are trying to bring your awareness to something important, and now they have your attention. In order to process the data you are being given and assess what is happening, you have to slow everything down.

The breath is your best tool for slowing it down. The power of your breath is incredible. Since the respiratory, circulatory, and nervous systems are connected, any intentional manipulation of the breath is going to directly effect your blood pressure and emotional state.

Doing something as simple as taking a moment to take 3 slow deep breaths when you are in the throws of overwhelm can start to slow everything down.

When you give yourself permission to slow down your thinking, it is as if you have put the brakes on. You are forcing yourself to be present for what you are feeling and thinking in the moment.

The experience of overwhelm can feel very chaotic and out of control, but when you slow it down you are reclaiming control over the experience.<sup>[2]</sup>

## **2. Step Back, Reflect, and Reframe**

Once you have slowed down, it's time to step back and reflect on what led up to the overwhelm. Some good questions to ask yourself are:

1. Did I put too much on my plate? If so who can I get to help me? What can I set aside for now?
2. Am I prepared enough? If not, what else can I do to prepare? Is there anything getting in the way of my preparation?
3. Were there signs I ignored that would have kept me from getting to this point?
4. Is there any self-sabotage at play?
5. What is the single most important thing I can do right now that will move me towards my goal?

Reflecting is great because it helps you to sort through the data you received from being overwhelmed. Taking the time to decipher this data will also help you to better understand what your body is trying to tell you in the future if you experience these sensations again.

Having a frame of reference for overwhelm ahead of time is invaluable. Instead of it feeling like a chaotic incoming tornado siren, it will feel more like a monotone, preventative early warning system.

Reframing happens when you have collected, processed, and reflected on the data and can now place the experience in a new perspective. For example, when I failed the bar, I thought it was the worst thing that could have ever happened to me. I was extremely upset. I was overwhelmed by the thought that I had wasted \$140,000 in loans and would not be able to pay my bills, get a job, or create the life I always wanted. My body felt sick, weak, and tired. My mind was heavy with all manner of negative thought patterns. It sucked.

Yet when I gave myself permission to slow it down, step back, and reflect, I realized that I would have hated being a lawyer. It took a while, but I was able to reframe that experience as a blessing that allowed me to identify my true calling – helping others achieve the success they truly desire.

## **3. Release, Regroup, and Redirect**

It's easier said than done, but when it comes to overwhelm the best thing you can do is let it go. Your effort to slow down, step back, reflect, and reframe have made it a lot easier for you to release the cause of your overwhelm.

Once I gave myself permission to reframe failing the bar, I was able to release it without any regrets. The release of the source of overwhelm is critical to the 'getting your life back together' component of this process.

In order to truly get your life back together, you have to regroup and redirect. The overwhelm put a chink in your chain, which halted your progress. Now that the chink has been worked out, you can place your chain back on the cogs and get back to work.

Regrouping is important because it allows you to close the feedback loop on all the slowing down, stepping back, reflecting, reframing, and releasing. It is like a metaphorical period on the sentence of the lived experience. It allows you to hit the reset button, and with all you know now, you can move forward in an informed, prepared, and empowered manner.

The last act is to redirect. Thankfully, all the work you have to done leading up to this moment will make it much easier for you to identify your new trajectory. Remember that redirecting doesn't mean you must move in a radically new direction; even if your trajectory only slightly altered its course – that's ok!

What is most important is that you have processed, integrated, and learned from your overwhelm so that you are both better prepared for future overwhelm and more equipped to avoid it all together.

## Final Thoughts

We have all been overwhelmed. Some of us are more easily overwhelmed than others. Yet, your progress doesn't need to be completely compromised because you experience overwhelm. You are strong enough to overcome it.

When you are feeling overwhelmed, remember to slow it down by using your breath. Give yourself permission to step back and reflect on what led up to the feeling of overwhelm because there is valuable data there. Reclaim your power by reframing the experience and releasing the source of overwhelm.

Lastly, close the feedback loop by regrouping and redirecting. You got this.

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