

A steadily increasing presenting problem in holistic healthcare is the phenomenon of overwhelm. The state of overwhelm is pervasive and can influence development of significantly problematic physical and psychological functioning. People who are overwhelmed experience a sense of fatigue, forgetfulness, brain fog, anxiety, panic and depression. Overwhelm can cause us to think that we are constantly falling behind and unable to meet our goals. This can lead to comparison of self to others and feeling a lack of accomplishment. People then internalize these feelings, particularly when they compare themselves to people whom they perceive to “have it all” or to be managing their lives more effectively. These negative internalizations can result in chronic activation of the body’s stress response, leading to significant physical, cognitive and emotional illness. This, in turn, results in exasperation, frustration and begets the vicious cycle of overwhelm.



**Overcoming Overwhelm
The Business of Busy-ness
by: Andrea D’Onofrio M.A. RP-CRA**

I acknowledge the fast pace of life and the many factors that influence this state of busy-ness. We have experienced an economic decline and rising cost of living that has placed a heavy focus on level of exertion at work in order to maximize or maintain employment. Many families consist of two working parents, which can result in less time to spend with children and potential feelings of guilt. There are tremendous societal pressures to achieve and attain, which may influence people to focus more on career than on their true passions. Pressure for children to succeed and engage in multiple activities can result in an enormous amount of time spent taking care of others instead of self. My question is:

*When did being busy become a measure of status?
Why is being the busiest a badge of honour?? Being
too busy has become a validating state.*



What can we do to reverse this unproductive focus and relieve the feeling of overwhelm? Society has placed an intense focus on attainment and has defined success specifically based on financial and material achievement. When I work with clients, I ask them to consider their own unique definition of success and measure it against the common societal version. My idea of success certainly includes being financially and materially comfortable, however a larger component involves being happy, healthy, pursuing my passions and living life fully. This adds a meaningful dimension to an otherwise rigid and narrow external conceptualization of success. In my efforts to attain my personal version of success, I have had to cut out certain activities, goals and even people that would otherwise detract from my ability to experience joy.

What energy-draining activities, goals or people are you willing to spend less time pursuing or engaging in or with? This can be an uncomfortable consideration for many, however the results can be liberating. Cutting down on activities, goals and interactions that do not serve our greatest good creates time and space for us to devote to those people, activities and goals that hold the most meaning and nourishment.

What activities are you or you family involved in that you don't truly enjoy? Can you cut them out or decrease participation to a more manageable level? Are there people in your life who take more than they give and have become an energetic drain? Is it necessary to engage in those types of karmic relationships or is it possible to decrease contact in order to spend more quality time with those whose love and friendship provide the greatest nourishment of mind, body and soul? Are you happy in your job, or totally stressed out? Is it possible to find a job that you love or leave an incredibly stressful job that you dislike while looking for a positive new role? ***Focus on what brings you joy and move towards it!*** These strategies to reduce busy-ness have worked wonders, for myself and my clients. ***Instead of focusing on what you have to lose, try focusing on the wonderful things you have to gain.*** These gains include peace of mind, clarity, focus, lower blood pressure and increased energy to participate in activities you love with the people you love! I encourage you to define your personal evaluation of success and use these simple strategies to reduce or eliminate overwhelm and enjoy a healthy life full of love, joy, happiness and health.

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