

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE FEELING OVERWHELMED

By Psychologist Katherine Wagner



With the unfolding Covid pandemic, it's normal to feel some level of stress. Common signs of stress include overthinking, sleeping problems, irritability, sadness, a sense of dread, speaking negatively and panic. Sometimes these signs reach a critical level and lead us to feeling helpless, out of control and OVERWHELMED! Luckily, there are some simple evidenced based techniques that can help.

Here are our top 4:

1. Breathe.

Check in with yourself regularly throughout the day. If you're feeling keyed up, deliberately take five slow belly breaths. Research shows that deep rhythmic breathing, reduces cortisol and helps to calm our mind. Put your attention on your belly and breath in for four counts, breathing out through your mouth for a slow count of five. Try to do this several times daily, and notice a sense of well-being this can bring.

2. Change your state

When our mind is in "stress storm" sometimes we need to shake up our physiology to regain mental clarity. Vigorous exercise like a run or fast walk changes our breathing rhythm and neurochemicals, and distracts us. Even listening to upbeat music, doing an online gym workout or getting out for a drive can work. The trick is to not stay stuck in the emotions of the problem at hand and deliberately seek temporary movement and distraction.

3. Focus on the Glimmers of Light

Another way to change your immediate state is to simply reflect on what is working in your life (there's always something). Bring to mind an area that you're proud of or gives you a sense of peace and gratitude - like a great piece of work you delivered, your relationship, or your current fitness regime. Really feel the emotions of pride, peace and gratitude in your mind and body, and immerse yourself for a few moments in this positive state. Deliberately reframing our mindset like this creates an mental "atmosphere" to help us solve problems- the opposite of feeling overwhelmed.

4. Sleep.

The importance of sleep cannot be overstated. Sleep affects our mood, ability to focus, and it also maintains our physical health. Work out how much sleep is right for you, and prioritise this. Make sure you create a relaxing 1-2 hour wind down time before bed (with low lightening, quietness, no technology) and aim to go to bed early enough to get your optimal hours of sleep. If you're having difficulty unwinding, don't stress and accept that it's normal right now. However a guided meditation can help you nod off.

For further tips and support in managing stress and overwhelm, contact Drake Workwise on **1300 135 600**. Also if you need support with an ongoing anxiety condition or challenge in your life, Drake Workwise are here for you.