



## **6 Steps to Cope with Feeling Overwhelmed in the Daily Grind**

I get it. Life can get rough.

It's easy to fall into a routine of just trying to keep up (or catch up), let alone get ahead. What does feeling overwhelmed look like for you?

- Having a short fuse/ Feeling irritable
- Feeling exhausted
- House/car/office gets cluttered
- Feeling depressed
- Feeling anxious
- Feeling forgetful
- Poor Concentration
- Not spending much time with friends
- Dreading work/the next day
- Physical symptoms, such as headaches, stomach upset, high blood pressure, etc.

There are many more symptoms I could list, I'm sure.

It can be very difficult to know where to even start! Let's work on it together. You are not alone!

In reflecting on numerous counseling sessions over the years, I've been thinking about what has been most helpful in coping with feeling overwhelmed. As a result, I'd like to recommend the following five steps:

1. Remind yourself that you are more normal than you feel.
2. Identify problem areas in your wellness
3. Decide where you are headed
4. Create a Plan with SMART goals
5. Arrange for accountability
6. Take action

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#### **STEP ONE: REMIND YOURSELF THAT YOU ARE MORE NORMAL THAN YOU FEEL**

One of the many common discussions I have had with client after client in individual sessions involves the isolation created by unpleasant emotional symptoms, such as feeling overwhelmed. I often read the list of symptom criteria when I make a diagnosis, just to point out that there is a REASON there is an established list. It means others deal with the same symptoms and my

client is not alone. I never want that to minimize their own, unique experience, but rather, help them to realize they are not as much on “the outside” as they feel.

As individuals, we cannot know for sure what others are feeling unless they tell us. Because our emotions are so personal, we can be left feeling pretty vulnerable, so we may try to hide them... *just like everyone else does*. In reality though, everyone has hidden struggles. Everyone has stresses and emotions that we all try to hide from others because if we let it all hang out, there's no predicting how others will react. Allowing our vulnerability to show can be very scary for both ourselves and others around us. It's a constant reminder that we all have vulnerabilities.

Something about human nature leaves us wanting to feel normal. Accepted. Lovable. We tend to shy away from things that don't seem to support those goals. Unfortunately, when we all hide those struggles, we all end up feeling isolated and abnormal, which only contributes to feeling overwhelmed.

Sometimes, just acknowledging that you are not alone, and that you are not the only one who struggles with feeling overwhelmed, anxious, depressed, etc. can do a great deal in helping reduce feelings of being overwhelmed. Simply acknowledging that you are not the only one who experiences the symptoms you do goes a long way. I talk to a lot of people who present on a daily basis like they have it all together, but behind the closed door of my office, I see a much different story.... and I consider that pretty normal.

**STEP TWO: IDENTIFY PROBLEM AREAS IN YOUR WELLNESS**

When we neglect areas of our wellness, problems are eventually going to make themselves known. The goal is balance. The problems are amplified when the area of wellness being neglected holds a lot of weight in your personal value system. If there is a large gap between you believe is most important for you to do and what you actually do, it creates conflict, just as gaps between what you expect from others and what they do in reality create conflict.

Take a few minutes to complete the following worksheet as you really examine your own areas of wellness.

# Dimensions of Wellness Self-Evaluation Worksheet



1. Take a moment to consider each dimension of wellness, then evaluate where you believe each dimension falls on the continuum for you at this time.



## Dimension of Wellness:

	weak	average	strong
Emotional - Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships.	----- -----		
Social - Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system.	----- -----		
Physical - Recognizing the need for physical activity, diet, sleep, and nutrition.	----- -----		
Spiritual - Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life.	----- -----		
Occupational - Personal satisfaction and enrichment derived from one's work.	----- -----		
Financial - Satisfaction with current and future financial situations.	----- -----		
Intellectual - Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills.	----- -----		
Environmental Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being.	----- -----		

2. What dimension(s) is/are strongest and healthiest for you? What has helped that dimension grow so strong? Be specific.

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3. What dimension(s) feel most distressing to you? Why?

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4. How do your weakest dimensions impact the others?

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5. What are you doing right in your strongest dimensions that you could apply to the others?

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6. What are 3 specific, doable actions you can take this month to work towards improved wellness?

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7. How do you plan to keep yourself accountable?

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### STEP THREE: DECIDE WHERE YOU ARE HEADED

As I discussed in a [recent blog post](#), I once watched a movie in which the characters were discussing where they were in life. One asked something like, “Have you ever wondered how in the world you got *here*?” The other responded, “No, I just ask myself, 'where am I going?' and 'how am I going to get there?'"

I thought it was a pretty powerful shift! Instead of looking at all of the circumstances and choices that led you to where you are now in life – all the pain and messes and oopses .... where are you *going* and how are you going to get there? What is your big picture goal?

As you consider your own big picture goal, imagine you have a magic wand. If you could make your life look like whatever you want it to look like, what specifically would be different? What parts of your ideal world are realistic? What areas of wellness need the most attention for you to feel “healthy” and not overwhelmed?

### STEP FOUR: CREATE A PLAN WITH SMART GOALS

With your big picture goal in mind, it's time to create a plan. Have you ever heard of SMART goals? Smart goals need to be:

**Specific/Simple, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Based.**

Take your time and go through the next steps to create your plan. Return to this workbook to

revise your plan whenever it's needed, but stick with it as well as you can!

**Goal(s)** – What are your first-priority realistic goals? What is the dream, vision, hope, or desired change? What goals are going to get your attention first?

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**Barriers** -What specific challenges stand between you and your goal(s)? Include challenges resulting from mental illness or addiction. What is keeping you from reaching the goal(s) you just described?

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**Strengths** - What individual/family abilities, attributes, attitudes, past accomplishments, motivations, etc. can help you overcome your barriers and reach the stated goal(s)?

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Support person	Specific support role – what can this person do to help you stay on track?	By what date/How Often?

## 6. Take action

Now that you're down to this step, I will tell you that the first 5 steps don't work....without this one. You can plan all day, every day, but it will be meaningless until you are motivated enough to put it into action. So... what is your motivation?

Think back to your ideal picture... your goal. Imagine it compared side by side to your current circumstances. Do you have enough reasons to be motivated? If you have given detailed answers throughout this workbook, you should have a very clear plan that breaks down each step so the process is no longer as overwhelming.

I hope you are able to take your plan one step at a time so you can quickly see progress along the way, which will give you the encouragement to move on to the next step. Celebrate your

successes, don't ignore or minimize them!

Be sure to join the [Every Day Incredible Ladies facebook group](#), where you can find extra support from other women like you who want to make every day more incredible by moving forward in their own plans.

If you are struggling with creating your plan, or just want more individualized feedback, take the next step! The [EDI Digging Deeper group is a paid membership group](#) for ladies who are more serious about taking action and moving toward their wellness goals.

**Resource:**

Image and descriptions of dimensions obtained from: <https://www.samhsa.gov/wellness-initiative/eight-dimensions-wellness>