



Your Remedy for Overwhelm

Are you increasingly busy, over-committed, and unable to see an end to the amount of work piling up? Many of us get stuck in an endless cycle of working harder and harder towards exhaustion, burnout, and illness. We know this from our own personal experience and have developed great clarity about how we become vulnerable to overwhelm and how to free ourselves from it.

We overwhelm ourselves through a pattern of choices that disempower ourselves and others. If we cannot confront the assertion that work-related overwhelm is self-inflicted, then we have no power to find a remedy; but why do we do this to ourselves? That's a question for your therapist. As business coaches, we don't go there. We focus on how we do it to ourselves and how to find your own remedy.

The first aspect of "how we create overwhelm" begins with a thought process and decision making pattern that lacks trust; example questions to uncover your blind spots include:

- Do we trust others to do their part?
- Do we trust others will do things the way we want them to? Does that matter?
- Do we trust that we have the power to negotiate priorities and let some things wait?
- Do we trust that our talent and contributions are sufficient to earn our keep and take care of ourselves effectively?

Ultimately, we need to develop deeper trust that Life itself will provide for us without compromising ourselves beyond the occasional and exceptional moments that require extra effort.

Without that, we develop a subtle belief that we must live in what LionHeart refers to as a fear-driven "dreaded future." This is a disempowering experience that:

- feels like a continuous cycle of mental struggle
- has us coping and compromising, versus speaking and acting from our highest intentions
- involves telling ourselves stories that justify our coping and compromising choices
- generates repetitive experiences of the overwhelm we don't want.

In our [Stress Relief](#) article you can read how others have used our 5 principles and self-coaching model called Transformational Problem Solving to empower yourself out of any undesirable reality. For a more in-depth exploration of this topic you can read Chapter 9 in our Mastering Effectiveness guide.

Once we recover our own highest intentions we need to improve how effectively we negotiate with others; example questions to uncover your blind-spots in this regard include:

- Do you understand and act upon the principle of matching yourself with people who align with your purpose, values, and competence?
- Do you know and communicate what is non-negotiable to you in terms of values, effort, and results?
- Do you negotiate explicit, clear assignments and set an expectation of voluntary accountability where people hold themselves accountable as a best practice for success?
- Do you proactively strengthen trust with respectful assessments of what worked and where improvements for the future are possible; and do so on a regular basis with the people you count on?

In our [Impeccable Workflows](#) article you will find a powerful model for empowering yourself and those you work with. Using this 4 Phase communication process effectively will expand your experience of productivity and trust with others; and it will provide lasting relief from overwhelm if you are genuinely committed to that outcome.

We suggest you read these background articles to support the short-term experiment we offer below. Your experiment is to develop a practice that will provide immediate relief, and inspire you to begin a longer-term journey of genuine transformation.

Let's begin by facing reality. One way or another you are not enjoying your work as much as you would like to. Perhaps important people are concerned about you; or they're getting more impatient with your unconvincing assurance that this is "just a temporary crazy time" and it's going to get better.

Congratulations! Talented, creative people always create more opportunity and attract more responsibilities than they can do themselves. The good news is that you have become successful, perhaps beyond what you imagined, but certainly beyond what you can keep up with. It is important to acknowledge and fully own your successes. This provides you with the energy to build upon them and create a new level of success without overwhelm.

The obvious answer to overwhelm has been better time management, but you believe you've already exhausted the benefits of multitasking, delegation, setting priorities, and squeezing 12 hours of work into a 10-hour day. You now realize that you cannot go fast enough to catch up with overwhelm, and something in your own thought process has to be reexamined.

At the bottom of every example of overwhelm we've encountered, including our own, there's always one thing missing: truth telling. We live in a reality or dreaded future that "I have to" or "I can't" to such a degree that we've forgotten our most important values and the freedom we have to make better choices.

If you find yourself rationalizing and defending a schedule or energy level that feels horrible, it's time to reclaim your life, declare a new possibility, and renegotiate what is expected of you - first with yourself. You will have to tell the truth about what you are committed to, what you can and cannot do, what you want to do, and what other people need to do for themselves and so on.

Of course, there's a learning curve. You will likely need to become a better teacher and have some heart to heart conversations. It will be uncomfortable at times; but you don't have to do it all at once. You can begin with a 10-day experiment, and recommit to your experiment until you have a new pattern of behavior and a new level of success. Remember, your initial successes can fuel your journey.

The LionHeart 10 Day Remedy for Overwhelm

It will take 45-60 minutes today to get started (steps 1-9), and 20 minutes per day for the next 10 work days (steps 10-11) to complete your initial experiment. If you are able to give yourself this time to assess, reflect, and renegotiate your compromising actions and the beliefs that keep them alive, this project will be your best use of time all year!

1. **Write down a specific goal that transforms the relationship between time and work that is meaningful to you.** (Examples: "I will no longer work on weekends; or "Within 30 days I will only work between 7 am and 6 pm Monday through Friday; "Within 4 months I will no longer spend time doing the administrative aspects of this job because I'll have hired the help I need"; "I will cut my time in meetings by 50% within the next 30 days").
2. **Write down your stress level over the past few months on a scale of 1 to 10.** (1 indicates that you have all of the time and energy you need to fully enjoy all aspects of your life; 10 indicates that your health, work, or family problems are painfully letting you know your life is being seriously compromised.)
3. **Write down the physical manifestations and the experiences that informed your self-assessment** (Examples: headaches, sleeplessness, tight shoulders, back pain, missed deadlines that matter, a messy desk, regular fights with your spouse, using weekends to catch up on sleep instead of spending time with your kids).
4. **Write down your predominant emotions and thought patterns that accompany these physical manifestations and experiences.** (Example: "I'm angry because I'm literally working myself sick to keep up with the lifestyle we've created together and instead of feeling supported by my spouse, I get criticized for working too much. I'm only doing this for the family.").
5. **Get a reality check from someone who will show you where you have a blind-spot.** If you are fully committed to a breakthrough, you will review your answers in steps 1-4 with your spouse or a trusted colleague for a reality check. This reality check is essential; if you are willing to have someone cross-examine the assumptions underneath your choices that lead

you into overwhelm, you can challenge yourself to find and debunk the beliefs that are preventing you from making better choices.

6. **In the next 10 minutes write down all the responsibilities and "to do" items that are top of mind, bothering you, or that you never seem to get to. Don't worry about getting it all down now, as you will be adding to it as you go forward.**
7. **Look at that list with complete honesty and trust yourself to find the wisdom you need to renegotiate with yourself.** Place a circle to the left of 3 items that really call to you as items that feel best to focus on today. Cross off the items you've been carrying around without the genuine commitment to complete. Place a name next to any item you need to discuss with someone – to ask for assistance or let them know you've taken it off your list.
8. **Reflect on the choices you've made by looking at your list again and feel your stress level in this moment.** Write down the number now from 1 to 10. If it is different from the earlier number, what physical sensations or emotions are relevant to your latest assessment?
9. **Go about your day with a focus on your 3 priorities.** See what's possible when it comes to getting your priorities done while completing other items and adding new ones to your list. Observe your own willingness and ability to challenge any disempowering beliefs and assumptions you've identified in steps 4 and 5 that contribute to your overwhelm.
10. **Each morning for the next 10 work days, spend 15 minutes in quiet reflection before you begin your day.** During this time reread your initial goal (item 1) and reflect on this question, "What decisions can I make, and what actions can I take today to achieve my goal?" Rework your list as you did in step 7 and honestly focus on what really matters to you that day.
11. **At the end of each day spend 5 minutes reviewing your stress level for the day.** Write down the number on your 1 to 10 scale, as well as the reasons you made that assessment (physical sensations, emotions, energy level, feedback, family experiences etc.). This step will help you learn as you go and validate the results of your experiment. If it feels like 2 steps forward and 1 step backwards, that's terrific. Celebrate the step forward and keep your eyes on your goal.
12. **At the end of 10 days review your overall progress and decide if you want to extend your experiment for another 10 days and/or adopt your morning reflection time as a non-negotiable part of your day.** Be willing to change your goal, adjust this process to fit your own style and do whatever it takes to reclaim your life until you love your work again.

We encourage you to customize and continue with your experiment until you have achieved your initial goal. We further encourage you to set new goals until you are genuinely experiencing a new and revitalized level of success. To take a more comprehensive approach to your Well-Being and Vitality, we have additional information and exercises in Chapter 2 of our Mastering Effectiveness guide.

If you want to pursue mastery of anything it requires daily and deliberate practice. Our Mastering Effectiveness guide (Chapter 13) includes specific steps to help you become very proficient in any leadership competency that is important to you. There is no limit to your professional growth and the joy that is available to you. Be well. Your world needs you at your best!