

I'm Overwhelmed, Now What? Tips for Dealing with Overwhelm from TinyBuddha

1. Three-Count Breath.

One way to help the body relax and restore its basic functioning is to steady your breath. Start in this way: Inhale for three counts. Hold for three counts. Exhale for three counts. After a few rounds of that, attempt to prolong the counts so that your breathing can slow and return to normal. This process can be helpful in less than a minute.

2. Stop Sign Visualization.

Those negative, looping thoughts that are spiraling out of control in your mind? They don't serve you. There's no time to listen to them, anyway: You have very important things to do!

So, to move forward without letting your thoughts drag you down, try this: For each self-defeating thought that pops up ("I'll never get it all done!" and so on), visualize a large, red stop sign in your mind and think, "Stop."

Try to drop the rest of the thought. This takes practice, because those thoughts have a lot of "psychic inertia" and that's why they need a "Stop Sign." Use it liberally.

3. Mantra/Affirmation.

Used alone or in conjunction with the Stop Sign Visualization, a simple mantra can be an effective tool.

Consider a few affirming phrases to repeat during these moments. It should be something that rings true to you and can reassure you. For example, "I can manage," "This will pass," "There is no emergency," or "It will all get done." Experiment with the right mantra for yourself, and repeat it often.

4. "5-5-5"

The purpose is to generate an awareness of your sensory experience so that you can feel more grounded in your body. Name the things you are experiencing for each of the senses: Identify five things you can see, five things you can feel, five things you can hear, and five things you can smell. For taste, a sip of cold water is often enough to bring awareness to the body.

5. Core Rooting.

Take a moment to stand with your feet a little wider than hip-width apart. Visualize your body as a tree, with your torso representing the trunk and your feet representing the roots. Focus your attention on your core and scan down your legs until you reach your feet.

Notice the ground beneath your feet. Feel the strength of your body. You are not "scattered" anymore; you are right here.

When you can center yourself in times of distress, you will find that you work more efficiently, relate to others more easily, and feel an improvement in your physical health. Each of the above techniques can be employed anywhere and anytime, in just a minute or two.

Experiment with one or all and see what feels right for you.