

OVERWHELMED AT WORK? 7 SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO MAKE THINGS BETTER

Summary: *If work is overwhelming, follow these 7 tips to take control.*

Do you dread going to work, simply because you never feel like you ever get it all done? Are you taking so much work home you don't feel like there is any time to yourself? Are there too many tight deadlines to meet? It is easy to get into a position where you feel overwhelmed at work, and it seems there is no end in sight. You can help yourself. Check out these top tips to get organized, prioritize, and get to a better place where you feel more in control of your work day.

1) Get Organized & Set a Schedule

Sometimes it can feel like you are constantly running from one thing to the next and back again. Nothing ever seems to get done. A huge part of feeling overwhelmed could be a lack of structure. If you hit the ground running, you never get the chance to get organized, to set a direction. Instead, you will often find yourself just reacting to the latest crisis, never really in charge of your day.

You may not be able to plan out your entire day, but you may be able to build in some structure. End each week with a plan for next week. Consider major projects, meetings, and daily tasks you have to complete. Set a basic framework for the coming week. Begin each day with ten to fifteen minutes of assessment time. Determine what are the most pressing priorities and what can be pushed to the back burner. You'll think more clearly and act more efficiently. That fifteen minutes will more than make up for itself.

2) Make Meetings Meaningful



Depending on your job, you could be spending up to one third of your work week in meetings. Make them count. Start with a plan and a schedule (are we seeing a pattern here?), and then stay on track. A little joking and small talk can be great for relationship building, just don't let it get out of hand and take over the meeting. Use meetings to level set; make sure everyone is on the same page, but don't feel like you have to solve the world in each meeting. Instead, focus on defining the issues, agreeing on a general direction, and assigning someone the responsibility to lead the resolution outside of the meeting.

Another effective time saver is to review the topic and touch base with the meeting leader before getting everyone together and determine if it is something that can be handled outside of a meeting. Maybe someone just needed an answer that already exists and you can point them in the right direction. Or perhaps the issue could be solved with a couple of quick emails. Either way, you may have saved yourself some valuable time and avoided an interruption in your day.

3) Evaluate Necessity

If you think about it, I bet you could name a dozen tasks you do now that you didn't do when you started your job. Did you give anything up in exchange? Your quality of work could be suffering while your stress levels are rising. Evaluate the true worth and necessity of each task you do and determine, is the task obsolete? If you can't give a good reason aside from, "just 'cause we've always done it that way," it's time to reconsider doing it at all.

Could or should someone else be doing the work? You might be a real go-getter and have a natural tendency to take on every job that comes your way. Be careful of the "if you want it done right, you have to do it yourself" mentality. Consider that, instead, you should delegate tasks to someone else who is in a better position to handle the job. You can still check in, but just don't feel like you have to do everything.

4) Know When To Say No (With Tact)

It could be that you are finding yourself overwhelmed simply because you never say no. Sure, you want to be perceived as a take action doer, and "no" just isn't in your vocabulary, but you could be signing yourself up for failure.

Assuming you've already set a schedule for yourself, and you've eliminated unnecessary tasks from your workday, you should have a pretty good idea of what you can handle and what time you have left in your schedule. Sometimes there's just not time to take on anything else. There are ways to say no without saying the word "no." You might tell a boss or a customer, "I really want to help you out with that, but I wouldn't be able to keep my current commitments," and then discuss what are the highest priorities. If you take the right approach, they will understand that you have everyone's best interests at heart.

5) Take a Break

Never underestimate the power of a break. It is so easy to get caught up in everything that is going on that you can lose focus. You get stressed, and that overwhelmed feeling sets in. Sometimes you just need to reset. Talk to a friendly co-worker. Go for a walk. Watch your stress fade away. You will find yourself coming back in a better place than when you left, often ready to go with a fresh perspective.

6) Stay Healthy

This common sense advice is easier said than done. Make time for exercise. Trade that burger at lunch for a more balanced, healthy meal. Sleep enough to feel rested. The fact is you will feel better. You will handle stress better. You will be more alert, and you will have much more ability to endure those extra long days. Take care of yourself, and you will be a better you.

7) Talk Out a Solution

When you are overwhelmed, it's easy to think the problem is only yours to deal with. Don't think you have to go it alone. Consider talking with your boss, a helpful co-worker, or a caring friend. Just be sure to avoid gossip and negative sympathy. If you involve the wrong people, it can be easy to get into a negativity spiral and end up in a worse place than when you started. Search for and be willing to take constructive advice. Surround yourself with positive influences. You might find solutions you haven't considered.

We all know work can be demanding and stressful. Just remember, if you apply these rules, they can be the lighthouse leading you safely through a rocky course and they will allow you to take charge of your work life.

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