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Revealing Failure as the Path to Success

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #214

Jim Harshaw Jr Solo- Dealing with Overwhelm

I have a client who wishes for a massive snowstorm to hit so that he can't do anything for four days but work on getting caught up. Ever feel that way? Like you just need the world to stop for a few days so that you can get caught up? Ever feel like there's just too much to do and that you'll never catch up?

Sometimes things pile up until you feel you're at a breaking point. In this episode, I give you 18 strategies to deal with that overwhelm and get your head above water.

Quotes

"What I need you to do is to not overwhelm yourself and do 18 things. Pick one for now, and then maybe pick a second one as you get things under control."

"Don't just do something, stand there! Sometimes, we just need to stop."

18 Steps To Dealing With Overwhelm In Your Life

1. Identify WIN (what's important now)

Create a to-do list so you can see what's important right now to you. For my clients, I send them a stack of post-it notes that I've created with five lines and a check box on the side for them to check off as they've done it. Create these for yourself but just write down one or two things you'd like to achieve.

2. Get clarity

You can create a journal, do a brain dump, a to-do list, just get it all out. Get clarity on what is important and what all that's swirling in your mind that's causing your overwhelm.

3. Get organized

Organize your desk. Organize your kitchen. These things make us feel stressed out and overwhelmed. There is research that shows organizing your desk is a valuable use of time and it increases productivity.

4. Hire someone

Hire somebody to clean your house, to babysit for you so you can get some work done or workout. Hire a dog-walker. Hire someone to cut your grass. Spend \$30 or \$40 to cut your grass once every now and then so you can get some space. Go to www.upwork.com like I do. I've got people to help me do stuff because I need help and so do you. Delegate. Get an intern if you have to.

5. Go out for coffee

Go out and grab coffee with a good friend. Let them know you're struggling and that you don't need a solution, but you need an ear and you need to vent. Have you ever had one of those conversations where you're really bent out of shape and you sit down and write this long, nasty email and you go, 'I'm not going to send this yet. I'm going to read this,' and you end up not sending it? You just feel better and you never get around to sending it. That's venting. We just need to get it out sometimes.

6. Be still

It's the last thing you want to do when you are overwhelmed. There is this quick relaxation where you take a deep breath, and you count from 5 to 1. At the count of 5, relax your lower legs, your upper legs at 4, your torso on the 3 count, your arms on the 2 count, and everything neck and above on 1.

7. Gratitude

Realize that you have it better than many others. Realize that just maybe, things aren't so bad. 'I'm overwhelmed because I've got to take my kids to sports. But my goodness, I've got four healthy kids. Man, I'm blessed.' Think about what a great problem to have and how many people in the world would love to have that problem.

8. Realize that this too shall pass

It will pass. This overwhelm really crushed me last week but here I am, a week later, feeling so much better and I have things under control.

9. Turn off the media

Sometimes podcasts and books about personal development leads to more overwhelm. You don't have to do everything. Just turn it off. Especially social media. You don't have to have the perfect family, going on a perfect vacation with a perfect car like you see on social media. You don't need that. Turn it off.

10. Set your vacation responder in your email

Even if I'm out of the office for half a day, I try to turn it on because it's like if I see 10 emails coming in, it ramps up the overwhelm. But knowing that I have the auto response on, it reduces the urgency so I feel better.

11. Realize that at night, everything feels bigger

All of your problems, your stress, and anxiety, it all feels bigger at 2 am. Why? Because humans are wired to feel this way. At night, you're supposed to know there's danger out there. You're sleeping in a cave, the fire's gone out, you hear a little noise, you're supposed to have an elevated alertness. This is how we've evolved. When you realize that you're staring at the ceiling in the wee hours of the morning worrying about your problems, when the sun rises, it shrinks away. Put this seed in the back of your mind to tell yourself that when you wake up, it'll be more manageable.

12. Take action

Just do one thing. Action creates momentum and that makes you feel better. Taking action on one thing can make you feel agitated for not taking action on other things. Just be mindful of that feeling. If you're not, you're not going to end up doing anything a lot of times. You just get paralyzed and start surfing the internet or something.

13. Say no

Refer to [Action Plan 150](#). One of my favorite scripts is 'If I say yes to this, I'm saying no to something else, like my family. I'm not ready to say no to them.' Tell people why. They will get it.

14. Learn to get focused

You can get a bunch of tips and tactics [here](#). There's a bunch of things here, like the Pomodoro technique.

15. Build in white space

When you look at your calendar for the next week or next month, block out a two-hour segment for anything like a lunch date etc. Block it out so it doesn't get taken up. Block off half a day, or a Saturday morning. Protect your time. Build in white space for working out, or just for doing nothing. You'll find yourself thinking, 'I've got time to breathe. Maybe I can catch up on some journaling.' It won't happen for you. It's a physical action you have to take.

16. Let a ball drop

I just did this last week. I'm training for a Spartan Race right now and I'm ramping up my training. But one morning last week, I didn't train because I had stuff to do that was of higher priority. I just thought, 'You know what? I'm going to let that ball drop this morning.'

17. Get physical

Workout, get a healthy meal, take a nap, drink extra water, or even just take a deep breath. Do something physical. One of my clients does this thing based off something called a dive response. If you jump into an ice-cold lake right now, your body will start shutting down blood flow to the extremities to protect your internal organs and your brain. You'd get the same experience when you switch the hot shower to cold and my mind is just focusing on the cold hitting my body. You'd get the same response if you hold an ice pack to your face for a minute. Your heart rate drops significantly and your body does a reset.

18. Go to a doctor

If you have anxiety or real stress issues, maybe you need to see a doctor. Maybe you need professional help and medication, but there are doctors to help you with stuff like that. More people go to the doctors than you realize. Take advantage of that.

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Episodes Referred

Jim Harshaw - How To Say No: <https://jimharshawjr.com/150/>

Eric Albright: <http://jimharshawjr.com/211>