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Coping With Overwhelm

Workbook

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Introduction

When you are faced with serious stress and you feel overwhelmed setting in you have to have coping strategies ready to use. So, for each coping strategy described we have created an exercise to help you put it into practice. That way, when you face your own overwhelm you know exactly how best to combat it.

Coping With Overwhelm Exercises

Exercise 1: Manage Overwhelm-Inducing Thoughts

Your thoughts can create stress within you so it's vital that you learn how to manage those thoughts that lead to overwhelm. Overwhelm-inducing thoughts include *I can't cope, I can't manage this because I'm too weak, There's nothing more I can do, I have no control.* Or thoughts about the future such as *I'm destined to be a failure, I'll probably lose my job, I can't see a way out.*

What overwhelm-inducing thoughts do you think? And, how can you challenge that unhelpful thought?

Overwhelm-Inducing Thought	The Challenge

Exercise 2: Let the Ball Drop

With the space below, create a list of everything you have to do over the next week.

For each, determine how important it is. If it's not urgent or important, then you may be able to delegate it. If you cannot delegate it, fit it into your schedule when possible. If it is urgent/important, consider delegating it or simply schedule it high on your to-do list. You don't have to do everything, just do what needs to be done and do it well.

Task	Priority Level	Delegate To	Schedule For	Completed

Exercise 3: Build Boundaries

A boundary is a limit, it's a rule that you set within your interactions. Someone with healthy boundaries feels comfortable saying no. The boundaries you set should be set based on your values or priorities. So, if you value family time you should find it easy to say no to anything that encroaches on that.

How would you enforce your boundaries in the following situations? We'll give you some examples first.

Your roommate has been eating your snacks and this is against the agreement you made.

I'd appreciate it if we could keep our snacks separate and I'd prefer if you ask before taking something that is mine.

Your friend calls you late at night and has big issues to discuss, but you have to be up early for work.

I love you and I know you're upset. I want to be there for you, but I have to work really early, can I call you back tomorrow at <specific time>?

Set Your Boundaries

You invited your friend over, but they have overstayed their welcome and you need to get to bed. Your friend doesn't show any sign of leaving.

Your good friend expresses romantic interest in you and invites you on a date. You have no romantic interest in this person, you want to let them down gently, but you know you need to be clear.

Exercise 4: One Step At A Time

What is overwhelming you right now? Break it down into bitesize chunks that you can complete one step at a time.

Step 1. _____

Step 2. _____

Step 3. _____

Step 4. _____

Step 5. _____

Exercise 5: A Moment of Meditation

Take five minutes to sit in silence and focus on your breath. What change do you feel in yourself following this moment of meditation?

Exercise 6: Forget the What-ifs

What-ifs are worries, and borrowed worries at that. You have to stop yourself from asking but what if because with every but what if comes anxiety that you made the wrong decision or it conjures up catastrophe at every turn.

The Emotion	Behaviors	Thoughts	Physical Feelings	The Correction

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Exercise 6: Positive Disconnection

What connections create you the most stress?

Is it answering work emails at all hours and allowing it to interrupt your personal time? Is it your dedication to checking social media every hour and let it impact your work and home life? Use the table below to make a note of your negative connections and how you can positively disconnect.

Negative Connection	Positive Disconnect

Exercise 7: Identify Stressors

I can identify when I am stressed because the following signs appear

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

I can recognize that the situation/event/person that is contributing to my stress is

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

To address this I need

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

5.

To address this I have

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Why does this situation appear dangerous to me?

My stressor is (tick whichever applies)

- Real
- Created
- A combination of the two

What strategies can you use to manage your stressors?

- Relaxation techniques (massage, body scan, visualization, breathing exercises, meditation)
- Exercise
- Music
- Hobbies
- Socializing
- Other

Exercise 8: Build a Plan

Create a plan for dealing with the stressors that you identified in the previous exercise.

But first, think about previous situations you have been in that are similar and how you coped then. Think about the lessons you learned and how those could be used now. Think about how you overcome, the skills, you used, and how you can ensure this time is different.

The stressor

Exercise 9: Be Realistic

With everything we have addressed thus far, it's time to remind you of this: be realistic.

No matter what you're doing you can dream big while being realistic in your approach. So, I want you to recall the exercise you completed in Let the Ball Drop. You made a list of your tasks and how important/urgent they are. Repeat this exercise below for the plan you created above.

Task	Priority Level	Delegate To	Schedule For	Completed

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