

THE HEALTH CLINIC

Taking care of the physical health and mental wellness of all your family members

THE BIG QUESTION

Q. I feel as if I'm on a hamster wheel at the moment, so much is happening in my life. I know I'm at risk of being overwhelmed but daren't stop in case it all falls apart. What should I do?

A: With so many changes in restrictions over recent months it is not surprising you are beginning to feel overwhelmed as the world opens up again. This chronic state of uncertainty, coupled with exposure to excessive and prolonged levels of stress, has led to a rise of what has been termed 'lockdown burnout' – manifesting as overwhelm, emotional exhaustion, sleep and concentration issues.

As a recovering workaholic, I understand how challenging it can be to slow down, especially in a society that promotes constant productivity. However, it is in fact the not stopping that can lead to things falling apart. In order to step off the hamster wheel, it helps to learn we have a present bias, a tendency to prioritise smaller, immediate rewards over larger future outcomes. Effectively, we are hardwired to try and achieve everything right now, yet this clouds our ability to see the bigger picture clearly.

Ask yourself the important questions. The first step to seeing the bigger picture is getting clarity on your starting point. I recommend grabbing a journal and asking yourself these questions, without judgement: What is happening in my life right now?



ABOVE: Charlotte Swire is a yoga, meditation and breath work teacher with experience with burnout

Where is my time and energy going on a daily basis? How is this fast-paced approach impacting my health, work, relationships and family time?

Often overwhelm and burnout are not one-off occurrences, but instead repeating patterns of behaviour. Once I fully understand a client's situation, we take time to untangle the mindset, the beliefs and the actions that have led them to an emotional and/or physical depletion.

Together we look for clues as to where these problems have shown up before, and frequently discover that they date back to university, school or sometimes early childhood.

Knowledge is power. If you can take the time to reflect on your past, you will be in a much stronger position to move forward knowing your blind spots and with an increased sense of self-awareness.

Choose how you want your life to look. The secret to true lasting change is crafting a new identity.

It is about thinking, acting and showing up like the person you want to become and working backwards from there. Whether you want to become a confident leader, a more present partner or someone that is calm and grounded, it all starts with how you show up now – how you talk, the language you use, the habits you have and the people you surround yourself with.

Identify those individuals within your circle that embrace a slower pace and gravitate towards them. We become like the five people we spend the most time with, so choose your relationships wisely.

Set boundaries. What to do about any invitations that don't align with this new vision you've created for yourself? Politely decline. It is time to normalise saying no. Because when you say yes to others but a no to yourself, it leads to resentment, exhaustion and overwhelm.

Our energy stores are not finite and we need to stop treating them as such. Setting boundaries can feel challenging at first. However when it is done with compassion, they can actually make our relationships with other people much stronger.

Ultimately, only you know what is the right thing to do for you and your one precious life. Take this advice as fuel for your own self-enquiry and find stillness and trust that the answers will come.

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