



Module One: Overworked, Overwhelmed, Overcommitted

Have you ever had one of those days or weeks when the alarm clock went off, and you didn't want to get out of bed? Life demands seemed so overwhelming that sleeping the day away felt like the best solution?

Or have you ever gotten off work feeling stressed with the reality that your second job of being a wife, mom or caretaker was your next call of duty?

If this is you, welcome to the world of the working woman. As women, we're often wearing too many hats. Being responsible for too many things often lead to feelings of being overworked, overcommitted and overwhelmed with life.

Therefore, this module will take you through the process of unloading your plate by helping you identify how you arrived at your current destination of feeling stressed and overwhelmed.

After completing this module, you will discover the events from the past five years of life that have framed where you are today. These questions and activities will assist you in discovering how balanced or unbalanced your current life is.

Take your time and don't feel rushed through this module.

What's Needed to Start?

Before starting this and every module, find a quiet place to answer each question. Gather a journal and something to write with. When answering each question, be open and honest with yourself about your answers.

This process is about identifying your truth; therefore, there are no right or wrong answer(s)!

Are you ready? Let's dig in.....

Step 1=The Acknowledgement Phase

Activity: Identify How You Arrived at Your Current Stressful Situation

It is easy to believe we have arrived at our current stressful situation(s) overnight. In some unforeseen situations this happens; however, most stressful situations accumulate over time. If not addressed, these situations can lead to chronic stress.

Therefore, this exercise will require you to create a list of life events that have occurred over the last 5 years. When listing your events, place a star on the events that were most stressful in nature. Keep in mind, there is a

category of good stress; however, we aren't going to focus on that category of stress for this exercise.

How to create your timeline?

Gather a journal, a few crayons and markers to begin. Once you have your journal and something to write with, position your journal horizontally (from side to side). Once the paper is in this position, draw a straight line from one end to the other on your paper. From there section your line into five sections listing years in chronological order. Start your timeline five years back from the current year.

From there begin to identify what life looked like during each year. Identify if you were healthier and happier in your personal and professional life. In your journal, write the year and describe what it looks and felt like. Plotting the last five years of your life will assist you in identifying how you arrived at your situation. By acknowledging these areas of your life, you are admitting to yourself that there are something that need to change. Acknowledgment is the first step in the change process.

See example below:

Stressful Move	End of 6 Yr. Relationship	Over committed To Community Work	Long Work Hours		
2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012

Step 2= The Confrontation Phase

Now that step one is complete. Answer the following questions.

- 1). What did you learn from the acknowledgement phase? What events transpired over the last 5 years that have contributed to your current situation of feeling overworked and overwhelmed?

[illegible]

2). Was it hard to acknowledge these events? Yes or No

Now that you have identified these events, it is time to confront them head on. Below list 5 things you have discovered about yourself and your life events over the last five years that need to be confronted.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Step 3= Take Charge Phase

Welcome to the take charge phase!

You're making great progress. You have acknowledged key areas in your life that have possibly caused or contributed to stress over the last five years. You have confronted these stressful areas, now it's time to create a plan of action to transform the things you are no longer satisfied with.

I will warn you, changing these areas won't be a quick process. Change is a nonlinear process that doesn't occur overnight and requires intentional effort. Regardless of how overwhelming the process may seem at first, creating a daily, weekly and monthly plan to address one issue at a time can assist you in moving forward to a healthier and less stressful destination in your life.

Assignment:

Review your top five life stressors or events. From this list, organize these events or stressors based on the level of stress. For example, if having your children involved in more than one after school extra-curricular activity stresses you the most, list that as the top-level stressor. From there list the other four stressors based on their level of severity. Once you have created your stressor list based on the degree of stress, make the decision to address your top two stressors first. From there work on each subsequent stressor on a bi-weekly or monthly basis. Take as much time as you need to process this list before you attempt to conquer the complete list. Yes, you have Superwoman capabilities, but

Superwoman needs time to process her next move too!

Sample Stressor List: Your list may look like something like this. See example below.

This is just a sample list. Ensure you take time to create your list.

Stressors are listed in order from the greatest stressor to the least

- 1). I work too many overtime hours at my job. I don't need the money; however, I am attempting to fast track progress in my career. I feel if I don't work extremely hard I won't get to where I desire to be within five years.
- 2). My spouse doesn't help with home tasks such as dinner, laundry, and discipline with the children. This often makes me feel like the bad cop, and he's the good cop.
- 3). I have gained 15 pounds over the last 8 months from working a sedentary job and don't like how I look or feel in my clothes.
- 4). I have very little social and personal time for myself. I have lost touch with myself.
- 5). My co-workers don't pull their load of work which requires me to work harder to accomplish my tasks and theirs. This makes me angry in silence.

Create a Plan of Action:

To change the stressors in your life, you need a plan of action. If you're married with children, your plan of action may include having a family meeting where you speak with your family to discuss your current needs. During this meeting clearly, state what your needs are and how your family can assist you with meeting these needs. We each feel supported differently, so don't feel guilty about what you need. Support for you may include having your husband and children take more initiative to helping around the house with household chores.

Whatever your need(s) are, take the time to think about what you need before meeting with your family. During your alone time, write a list of your needs and make sure you start your conversation off calmly by telling your family how much you love and value them. When speaking with your family, it is important to make “I” statements that place you in control of how you feel versus making “You” statements that have the potential to place your family in a defensive mode if you're speaking in a “You” fashion.

An example of the different language tone would be, (I language) “I feel very overwhelmed with attempting to juggle work and be a great mom and wife. Therefore, I would like to have help around the house to have more free time for myself” compared to (You language) “You don't listen to me, and you are always leaving the house a mess. You don't appreciate me, and I am sick of being the maid around the house. You need to grow up and take care of your stuff around the house”.

You can tell from the different statements, one has the potential to create a healthy dialogue whereas the other can cause anger and chaos in your home. It is advisable to not have this meeting when you're feeling overworked and overwhelmed. Instead, find a time when you can think clearly and less defensively. This will result in a better conversation for all parties involved.

On the other end of the spectrum, if you're single and feeling overwhelmed with an abundance of work, social and community obligations, determine what activities you can decrease. For instance, if you volunteer at two organizations, determine which is most important to you and focus strictly on that organization. If you're trying to climb the corporate ladder and work too many hours, cut back and realize through demanding work, commitment and time, you WILL reach your career goals. However, don't jeopardize your health in the process of getting there.

You're NOT Alone

It is normal to struggle with balancing life, career and your health. Regardless if you're single or married, creating more balance in your life will ultimately provide you with more time for yourself and self-care. This can result in better overall health, improved relationships and life satisfaction!