



Overwhelm YOU versus Focused YOU....who is the winner?

I don't think the biggest pandemic these days is swine flu. There is a growing condition of overwhelmedness sweeping the land and the world.

No, the virus that's going around these days is overwhelm (the Australian strain is Overwhelmus Australianus). If you're not sure you have it, here are the most common symptoms:

Feeling buried or drowned by a huge mass of information, ideas and to-dos, the huge mass includes email, articles, Twitter, the media in general, the recession?

The general response is: I have too much to do! There's too much to read! I don't know where to start! What if I miss something? I can't handle all of this stuff! Get me outta here! Look, I understand; I know.

Not only am I infected with overwhelm, I'm one of the carriers. I know that this eZine, and emails from me inviting you to a teleclass, or the aforementioned Think Like A Champion Club updates, can send susceptible people into an out-of-control spiral of overwhelm. **But I'm recovering from overwhelmitis, and you can, too.**

So, first of all, put down everything else, take a deep breath and take just two short minutes to read an Overwhelm Prescription I read from Robert Middleton of Action Plan Marketing.

First of all, I'm not going to give you a long list of things to do. I started with that and then thought, "What am I doing? that will only overwhelm people more!"

No, the solution to dealing with overwhelm has little to do with doing, but a whole lot to do with who you are being.

A ton of email, information and projects triggers overwhelm, but they're not the cause. You are the cause. That is, part of who you are might be called "Overwhelmed Janet" or "Overwhelmed Bill."

When those triggers happen, "Overwhelmed You" goes into full overwhelm mode. You feel stressed, confused, panicked. Your heart rate goes up and blood supply goes to your limbs for the "fight or flight" reaction. You're not thinking too clearly. You want to run away, or better, go to sleep.

Overwhelm is simply a reaction that is protecting you from a perceived danger, triggered by all that stuff on your desk, in your email box and on your to do list. All that stuff's not out to get you, but it seems like it!

These days, it's possible to live in an almost a constant state of overwhelm. And if this is the case, productivity plummets, creativity ceases and your business stops being fun.

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Champion Mindset® Consulting ABN 50 084 623 941 PO Box: 2178 Claremont North WA 6010

Phone: 1300 78 41 70 Fax: (08) 6210 1414 Email: office@championmindset.com.au www.championmindset.com.au



The best response we usually have to overwhelm is to get organised. And there's nothing wrong with that. But all you are doing is temporarily removing the triggers. But triggers have the habit of popping up again. You face 100 emails one morning and overwhelm is looming large again, bigger than life.

So, is there an ultimate solution to overwhelm?

Yes, don't focus primarily on the triggers, but on connecting with another You. Let's call this "Focused You." Focused You is more resourceful, more calm, more present, more balanced.

Focused You, is a part of you that is already developed. You have the skills and the ability to act from Focused You whenever you want. It's just that you forgot. Overwhelmed You took over and reigns supreme much of the time.

If the purpose of Overwhelmed You is to keep you safe from harm, then the purpose of Focused You is to act with clarity and intelligence. Focused you is interested in getting the job done, making a contribution, even doing marketing activities.

When you step into Focused You, even in a chaotic situation with a lot of overwhelm triggers, you can still be calm and centred. Then you can calmly make your priority list, handle your email, and get on with your work.

Overwhelmed You or Focused you, who will you be today?

A simple exercise to shift from Overwhelm to Focused Self

Here is one simple way to stop and identify your strategy for intentionally changing your state from Overwhelm to Focus. One strategy that works is to: Stop. Look. Listen. I do this by stopping (typing, talking, fiddling, filing, anything), taking one deep breath, looking into the distance, listening for the farthest sound and feeling my feet on the floor. Then I ask myself: What's the ONE thing I'm going to do right now? The ONE next actionable item.

Simple..Yes! Successful ...Absolutely Yes! So take a step back before you plunge into overload and simply focus your attention. You'll end up 'in the zone' of awareness and clarity. With focus can come prioritising and then decision(s).

What doesn't work? The do-list isn't the solution, in fact it represents the problem; there's a saying "The guy with the longest do-list loses." Overwhelm is an emotional reaction, a process for managing the stress the individual feels by rejecting it. Of course, the ensuing feeling of overwhelm isn't much of a solution - more an escape.

It has been suggested "feeling through the feeling" was the right way to fly, confronting and identifying the feelings we muster up to avoid confronting the multiple tasks before us. Personally I like the solution of "focus" a lot, because it also implies a different mindset, a one-at-a-time way of dealing with the issues before us. I also think there's a lot more in this, and that you might turn your agile brain to the problems and solutions of managing overwhelm and generating focus.

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It is a good reminder to concentrate on the important and not the tyranny of the "urgent" which seems to rule our lives. One of those seemingly "little" things that can quickly overwhelm us is the daily in-pouring of e-mails. E-mail can quickly become unmanageable. The Overwhelmed You is sneaky and even though The Focused You always tries to be alert sometimes they do fall asleep too.

Ideally, one project at a time. But on the broader scope, it really is about time-management and understanding yourself. Some things that are your strength, or when you do them at the best time of the day, you can multitask. Otherwise, one thing at a time or else nothing would get done.

One thing to avoid getting into the habit of is sacrificing "service" by simply deleting or not responding to many e-mails that deserve a response. Nothing is more frustrating than to send someone an e-mail containing information they have requested and never have them tell you it was received. If the individual never takes five seconds to hit reply and type "thanks", how can we know we've made the connection?

A simple common courtesy and one of the ways that I provide that "extra touch" for clients, colleagues and friends (not spammers or junk mailers) is by sending a "thanks" reply to acknowledge receipt of what they sent me. It takes 5 seconds, and it tells the sender "message received".

Final word from Coach Shelley: Once you're coming from Focused You, you can take the steps to get organised, create systems, and do planning and other things that will mitigate some of the triggers. But you'll know that it is Focused You that is in charge and that no matter what happens, you never need to let Overwhelmed You take over again.

Tell me about your Focused You. How does this Focused You work to help you produce results? So how do you cope with overwhelm? Let us know ...send us a comment --- whether it is to pause, get grounded, concentrate on a single accomplishment, or go for a swim...we would love to receive your feedback.

Cheers to the rejuvenated & reenergised focused YOU!
Shelley Taylor-Smith

About Shelley Taylor-Smith

Shelley Taylor-Smith is Australia's No.1 Mental Toughness Coach: by looking at how they spend their time and energy – and where they focus their attention – Shelley helps people transform their Champion potential into performance. An energetic and inspirational speaker, international bestselling author and corporate educator, Shelley demonstrates how harnessing the power of your mind and boosting your self belief can help you achieve your goals. With her passionate commitment to being relatable, Shelley delivers a powerful lesson in mental toughness. Find out more and subscribe to Shelley's fortnightly Champion Motivations newsletters go to:

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