

74: How to Deal with Overwhelm



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Welcome to *The Wealthy Mom MD Podcast*, a podcast for women physicians who want to learn how to live a wealthy life. In this podcast you will learn how to make money work for you, how you can have more of it and learn the tools to empower you to live a life on purpose. Get ready to up-level your money and your life. I'm your host, Dr. Bonnie Koo.

Welcome to Episode 74. So, today I want to talk about how to deal with being overwhelmed. So many of my clients feel overwhelmed all the time, including me. And this topic for this podcast episode was inspired by my clients and also by me in terms of what I've been going through inside my business.

So I'm going to weave in some stories I've been hearing from my clients and also examples from my life. And I'm super excited to talk to you about this today. So, so many of my clients, before they come and work with me, they tell me that they're feeling overwhelmed about money. They don't know where to start, they don't even know how to start, where to start, or even what to do.

And a lot of my clients are feeling overwhelmed because there's so much to do. They have this huge to-do list, they don't have enough time, there's this huge list, never ending list that keeps getting added to. Can you relate? Ultimately, all these thoughts lead to the feeling of overwhelm.

Now, I actually was thinking about what does feeling overwhelmed actually mean? And I think I actually looked it up and I wasn't super thrilled with the definition I found. And I was wondering, is overwhelmed a thought or a feeling? I think it could be both.

Now, it might not truly matter which one it is. But I think people are thinking I feel overwhelmed. I think the feeling in our body is a mixture of feeling anxious and paralyzed. And when I feel overwhelmed, I literally feel like I can't think, that I can't even make simple decisions. And it just feels overwhelming in my body as well.

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So I guess you could say it's a thought and a feeling. But anyway, getting back to the point of this podcast, I think there are a few sort of underlying thoughts that people aren't fully aware of when they're feeling overwhelmed and feeling like they don't even know what to do. And there's two that I've discovered by thinking about this more.

So I think the first sort of underlying thought is that if we choose one thing to work on, or if we choose one thing to get started on, because I feel that a lot of advice given out there about what to do when you're overwhelmed is to just pick one thing, just get started, it's fine. Is I think we think that if we work on one thing, or get started with one thing, then we start noticing all the other things on our to-do list that aren't getting done.

And maybe also, we think that focusing on that one thing means that we aren't working on all the other things. They're related, but they're slightly different. In other words, we just get really stuck in perfectionistic thinking or also called all or none thinking.

If you really think about what we actually do when we're overwhelmed, it totally does not make sense, right? Because basically, we're thinking there's so much stuff to do, or I'm feeling overwhelmed, which makes you feel anxious or overwhelmed, whatever it feels like for you and your body. And then what we actually do from that feeling of overwhelm and anxiety is we don't do anything. And then we create the results of nothing gets done.

And so our brains like to go into all or none thinking, meaning it goes to extremes. So it's like, "There's so many things to do, so why bother?" That's kind of what I mean by all or none thinking, it's like we go to the extreme of why bother and not getting anything done, even though we so want to get things done.

And so going back to that underlying thought that if we just pick one thing, or we pick the wrong thing to work on, because of course there's a right one to work on first, that we're not getting to all the other things because they're unrelated.

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But I want you to question these thoughts like what if that's just not true? Meaning what if working on one thing is actually working on all the other things on your to do list? Because, I'm sure you've heard, how we do one thing is how we do everything. And even though they might seem unrelated on the surface, I like to think that the skill sets required for the thing we're working on, are going to apply to the other things we're working on.

And so I know this might sound kind of vague, so let's give you an example. So I always talk about how I have a business coach and I also have a general life coach. And so I think a few weeks ago I started with a new general life coach.

And I was having trouble deciding what to work on first because of the thought errors that I mentioned earlier. That I don't know which one to do. And there's a right one to start with, and maybe I should focus on this, but I want to focus on that. Which basically creates the results of me on not being able to pick one to focus on.

And my coach offered me what I just offered you, which is what if working on whatever you choose, is actually going to help you on the other things? Hearing her say that just immediately calmed me down. Because I think part of the overwhelm and anxiety for me was if I pick working on losing weight, that means I'm not working on improving my relationship with my son or Matt.

So those are the choices I had. I want to work on losing some weight. I want to improve my relationship with Matt. I want to improve my relationship with Jack, and generally improve my relationships with the people in my life that I care about.

And so in my mind, I'm like, "Well, if I focus on losing weight, that means I'm not focusing on or working on my relationships." And so she started to ask me what if that wasn't true? What if it all would equally apply? And then I'm like, "Okay." Of course, initially my mind was like, "How does working on losing weight apply to working on my relationship with Jack?"

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And she asked me a series of questions. I don't remember exactly how it went but I remember her asking me, "Tell me what you would have to learn or work on to lose weight." I actually think I picked maybe my relationship with Jack, but it doesn't really matter because the illustration will sort of make things obvious.

But she asked me what would I have to learn to improve my relationship with Jack? And I said, "Well, I would need to learn to be present and spend time with him without my phone or getting distracted, and just spend concentrated time on that." So being present was a skill. So then she asked, "So how does that skill help you lose weight?" Do you see what I'm saying?

And so for me, when she asked me that question, I was like, "Oh, being present will help me lose weight, because I'll have to be present about the food choices I'm making, for example." I don't remember exactly what I said, but she kind of made me think hard about it because it's really easy to say on the surface like, "Well, they're not related."

And then the other thing about being present that I verbalized was not only what I have to learn to be more present with my son, I have to also deal with the discomfort because sometimes it's boring to play with a toddler, let's just be honest. And so I might be like, "Oh, I don't want to do this." Or "This is boring," and want to do something else. And dealing with that discomfort or restlessness to do something else.

And that also relates to losing weight, because it's easy to be like, "Oh, I created this, whatever, food plan for the day to eat this." And it's easy to get to that meal and think, "Well, but I really want to eat this" or "I want to eat more." And dealing with that discomfort and still choosing what I said I was going to do.

So I hope that gives you a solid example of how working on one thing is actually working on all the things. And I had a client, actually, I'm thinking

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about weight loss a lot because I've had a few clients bring this up to me, even though I coach on money.

Did you know that money and weight loss coaching are actually very similar? In fact, I'm going to have a guest coach in the near future to talk about this because the skill sets required to lose weight are very similar to how to create a lot of money. So stay tuned for that one.

And so she was choosing between losing weight and working on a bunch of other things in her life. And then she's like, "You know, I really want to work on losing weight." But then I noticed her brain kept going, "But I need to work on this and that."

And so I paused her and asked her the same question. What if working on this is also going to be working on the other things? And I could just see it in her face, like her face just immediately relaxed because I think a lot of the angst or the overwhelm comes from this perfectionistic thinking.

Which makes sense because we are type A perfectionistic women, as if there's like a right way to do things and we really get caught up in we have to choose the right thing to work on. If we choose the wrong thing it's wrong and we don't like being wrong, right?

And so it makes sense that our brains do this but truly, if you can hang on to the belief that working on one thing is working on all the other things. And that whatever you're going to learn and work through to lose weight or create money or spend less is 100% going to help you on the other things in your life you also want to uplevel.

Now, there's an analogy that someone told me a long time ago about soccer balls. And maybe I've said it on the podcast before, but worth seeing again. Imagine you're on a field and there are four soccer balls. And there's a goal on the other side, I don't know how many yards away, but you've got to kick it several times to get there.

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And the rule is you only get four kicks. And so you can either kick one ball four times and get it into the goal. Or you could kick each ball once and make some progress, but not a whole lot. And that's why focusing on one thing, you get things done so much faster.

Because not only that, there's no such thing as multitasking, even though we all think we can. And there's science behind what's called task switching, where if you switch your tasks, it causes your brain to slow down significantly. I like to just tell my clients when I'm explaining this analogy, you just get stupid temporarily when you're task switching, basically.

And that's why I'm a huge fan of batching. I tend to record about three podcasts at a time. I'll plan and then record all at the same time so I'm kind of in the mode of creating episodes and recording them all at the same time. Because I'm kind of doing a similar task over and over again so there's less time being stupid and task switching.

And so it makes sense to focus on one thing versus trying to focus on lots of little things. If we stop telling ourselves that picking one thing means other things aren't getting done, because that's just a lie, you're going to feel so much more relaxed. And you'll only have to focus on one thing.

So let's summarize how to deal with feeling overwhelmed. I think the first thing is to notice that it's only because you're thinking you're feeling overwhelmed. And you're having thoughts like there's too much to do, I don't know where to start.

And the second step is to remind yourself that you only have to pick one thing. And honestly, it doesn't matter. So if you still are having trouble picking the one thing because you think there's a right thing even though I just went over there's no such thing, just flip a coin or eeny miny mo, it really doesn't matter.

And then you get to work on that one thing. And believe that working on this is going to help you work on the other things at the same time.

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Whatever you're learning or having to do is going to apply to those other things and will actually make those other things go faster.

And going back to the soccer ball analogy, in case you're still not on board, it's like if you kick that one ball across the finish line in the four kicks, then you know, "Oh, I need to kick this way to really make those kicks count." Which helps you get those other balls across the field.

So I hope this was super helpful. This was helpful for me to work out in my brain for myself. And I hope this really helps you banish overwhelm and get you going. I'll talk to you guys next week.

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