

10 WAYS TO STOP FEELING OVERWORKED AND OVERHELMED

TIPS TO AVOID OCCUPATIONAL BURNOUT

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I had just read an early version of a new book and decided to do a quick survey during a speaking engagement. I asked the audience, "How many of you feel overworked and overwhelmed?"

As far as I could tell, every hand was raised. No surprise there. We all feel overworked. And we all feel overwhelmed, at least some of the time. Even if by other people's standards, we seem to have it easy, to us it still feels like we're overwhelmed.

Effectively balancing our professional and personal lives is a problem we all struggle with. Maybe that's because we look outside ourselves for solutions: software, apps, devices, time management systems and such.

All of those can help, but as Scott Eblin, author of *Overworked and Overwhelmed: The Mindfulness Alternative*, says, "The only person who is going to keep you from feeling overworked and overwhelmed is you."

To Eblin, it all starts with one thing. You must commit to intentionally managing your time so you have a fighting chance of showing up at your best: your most inspired, your most productive, and your most "in the flow."

So, how do you do that? Here are Eblin's tips:

1 Recognise and overcome the tyranny of the present

People who are always "in the moment" don't look ahead and make plans to pursue their goals and dreams. Though there are things you need to do every day, much of what you think you need to do isn't particularly important—especially where your long-term goals are concerned.

That's why you should...

2 Ask, "Is this really necessary?"

Challenge your basic assumptions about your regular habits. Do you need to

have that meeting? Do you need to create that report? Do you need to respond to that e-mail? In many cases, you don't, but you do anyway simply because that's what you've always done. Eliminate as many "nice to do" tasks as possible. Not only will you have more time, you'll also have more time to be effective where it really matters.

3 Push reset on your calendar

Sometimes the answer to "Is this really necessary?" is, "Yes, but not right now." What is the most important thing you need to do today? What tasks will keep you from getting that done? The same is true if something important pops up: Immediately reset your calendar and re-prioritise. Getting stuff done is fine, but getting the right stuff done is what really matters.

4 Determine (and follow) your unique operating rhythm

We all work differently. Some like to hit the ground running. Others like to start the day by reflecting, meditating, and thinking. Some like to work late into the night. The key is to understand not just how you like to work but also how you work best. You might like to work late at night, but if you're tired and frazzled by a long day you won't perform at your best. Isn't performing at your best what matters most?

Do some experiments to figure out what works best for you. (Here's a cool infographic on the impact of schedules on productivity.) While you won't always be able to stick to your plan, you will always have a plan to return to. (See Figure 1)

5 Schedule the most important tasks first

What are your priorities for the month, week or the day? Determine what they are and do those things first. Why would you work on less important tasks when the truly important items are where you create the most value—whether for your business or your life?

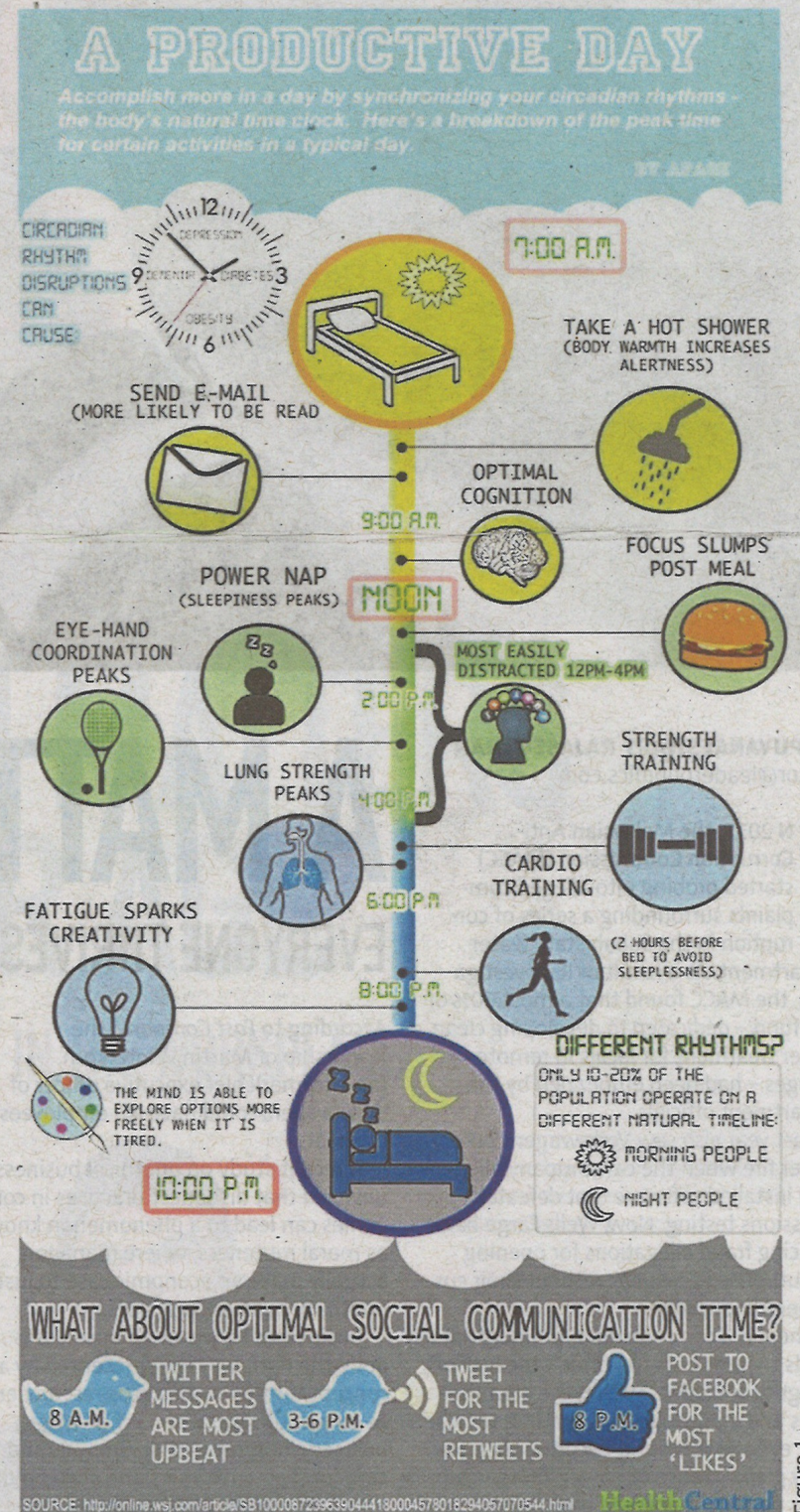
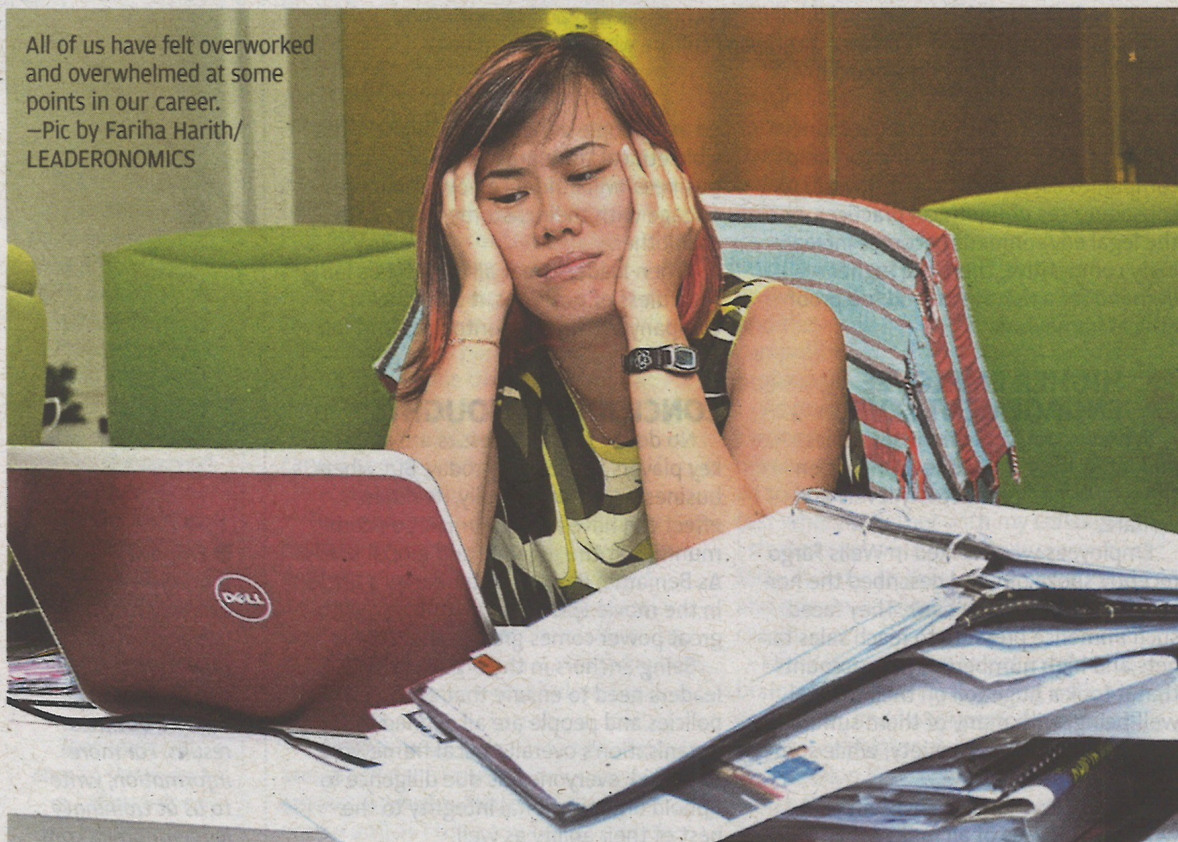


Figure 1



All of us have felt overworked and overwhelmed at some points in our career.
—Pic by Fariha Harith/
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6 Give yourself time for unconscious thought

Giving yourself time for unconscious thought is key to making smart decisions when you face complex problems. Research shows people tend to make their best decisions when they have an opportunity to review the data and facts and then focus their thought on something else for a period of time.

How? Take a walk. Do a mindless chore. Exercise. Do something where your body takes over and your mind goes on autopilot. You'll be surprised by the solutions you can dream up when you aren't trying to be creative.

7 Set boundaries

No one can or should be on 24/7. Yet you probably feel you are—because you allow yourself to be. Set some boundaries: the time you'll stop working, certain times you'll do things with your family, certain times you won't take calls and such. Then, let people know those boundaries. Other people won't respect your time unless you respect it first.

8 Be strategic with 'yes' and 'no'

You can't say yes to everything. (Well, you can, but you won't get everything you say yes to be done—so in effect

you're still saying no). Sometimes you simply need to say no. Other times you can say, "No, unless..." and add stipulations. The same is true with yes. Saying, "Yes, but only if..." creates guidelines. Always consider the effect of a request on your most important goals. An automatic yes also automatically takes time away from what you need to get done.

9 Tame your distractions

Most people are distracted over 30 times an hour: phone calls, emails, texts, office drop-ins... the list is endless. Schedule blocks of time when you'll turn off alerts. The only way to stay on schedule is to work on your own schedule—not on that of other people.

10 Remember your impact on other people

If you're a leader—and if you run a business, you naturally impact other people. You set a direction. You set a standard. You're a role model. Be a great role model: a person who gets important tasks done, who stays on point, who focuses on achieving goals and dreams and who helps other people achieve their goals and dreams.

That's reason enough to manage your time so you're consistently at your best.