

# Squiggly Careers PodSheets

## How to cope with overwhelm at work



We feel overwhelmed when the complexity of modern life surpasses the complexity of mind.



Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey, Harvard Professors and authors of 'Immunity to Change'

### What are the first steps to take?

≈ **Spot your triggers:** Can't say no to additional requests?  
≈ Are you lacking support? Are your expectations too high?

≈ **Understand the impact:** e.g. you can't sleep, you go into 'robot mode', make mistakes, feel confused or forgetful

### 10 actions to take back control and overcome overwhelm at work

**1 Know the difference between good enough and great**  
Start your week by identifying tasks that need to be great. *Accept that not everything has to be perfect.*

**2 Is it significant enough to sink the ship?**  
Prioritise where your energy goes. ask yourself if any of this is going to sink the ship. *If it is, put your energy and time into that.*

**3 Say 'no' or 'not now'**  
if you find it hard to say no, practice the art of saying 'not now'. *Help others to understand what is time-critical and what is not.*

**4 Get yourself a 'done' -list**  
What progress are you making on your to-do list? *Get motivated by putting a post-it on the wall when you have completed something to show progress.*

**5 Release the tap on your stress bucket**  
if your 'stress bucket' is getting full, take the time to rest and reset. *This will feel challenging, but it's key for your resilience and just 5 minutes can help.*

**6 Beware of doing it all yourself**  
People like helping people and we get better when we receive the help we need. *'If something can be completed 80% as well by someone else, delegate!' Jon Maxwell*

**7 Adopt Can/If thinking**  
'I can do this / If I do that thinking' can help you prioritise and find creative solutions to your problems. *What solutions can you come up with?*

**8 Get some perspective**  
Get somebody else's perspective on how they would manage your overwhelm. *Or try reading about something bigger than you to regain your perspective.*

**9 Read / watch / listen to something new**  
Switching off momentarily is another way to take back control when feeling overwhelmed. *What inspiring things have you read / watched or listened to recently?*

**10 Take action and declutter**  
Rediscover the focus you need to do your best work. *Whether its a new notebook, a tidy desk, or meditation for a clear mind.*

### Coach Yourself Questions

? What makes you feel overwhelmed at work and what impact does it have on you?

? What are your triggers for feeling overwhelmed and what action can you take once you spot these?

### Recommended resources



#### [How to Deal with Constantly Feeling Overwhelmed](#)

A useful HBR article by executive coach Rebecca Zucker on the topic of overwhelm



#### [The stress-bucket explained](#)

A useful explanation about the stress bucket analogy to help manage overwhelm



#### [How to manage your monkeys](#)

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Amazing if