

EPISODE 010: 5 WAYS TO WORK THROUGH OVERWHELM

BY NANCY RAY

Intro

I have an invitation for you today. Choose the courageous thing and slow down. It's time to live a simpler, slower life than the one that you're living. Does that feel impossible? Does it feel like it just cannot happen for you? Do you feel scattered and a bit out of control? I know sometimes I do. Maybe you feel like your life can't actually change right now because of work, kids, or a schedule that you really can't change. Well, friend, I have good news. Even though your life can't change, you can. You can change. The feeling of living out of control and always in the chaos can absolutely change because you can always change.

You're listening to Work and Play with Nancy Ray, Episode 10.

Much of our daily lives can be divided into two categories: work and play. Simply put, that is where our life and our legacy take place. This is a podcast all about learning to work and play well, which leads to a healthy soul and a fulfilling life.

Listen in.

Content

Today we're going to talk about five ways for you to work through that feeling of overwhelm that honestly overtakes us every once in a while and leaves us feeling so helpless. For me, it often comes when my schedule is full and overflowing and I just don't know what to do next. It's like a paralyzation that comes over my body and my mind, oftentimes leading to tears, and it's just so overwhelming. But I know that abundance and overwhelm can't really coincide, and I know that the life God plans for us is a life of abundance, and so hopefully today you're gonna listen to some practical things that you can walk away with to just help you work through that overwhelm. On the days that you feel overwhelmed, you can stop and maybe come back to this episode and listen to a few things that you can do to get to the other side of it—to get to that side of abundance, which is the place that we're meant to live because someone once said, "Yes, overwhelming feelings happen, but it's just not supposed to be the norm." Right? Like, it's normal to feel overwhelmed time-to-time. That's just life. I'm not saying you're going to live life without being ever overwhelmed, but I don't want you to live a life of overwhelm. I don't want it to be the norm for you.

So I'm going to walk you through five ways that you can embrace that calm and embrace the

abundance and navigate your way through that feeling of overwhelm this episode. And before I do that, I just want to let you know there's a free download for you in the show notes today. Five ways to create this calm amidst the chaos. Five ways to find that abundance in the overwhelm. You can get your free copy of that, your free PDF just to refer back to if you need it, in the show notes today.

So let's talk about those five ways that you can do that.

NUMBER ONE: GROUND YOUR HEART FIRST

I love this quote by Shauna Neiquist:

"When life feels loud, I create quiet. Prayer, reading, listening. This grounding makes my heart strong again to go back into loud spaces."

I love that, because life is just loud, right? And that's a lot of times, when all the noise of life comes kind of closing in around you, that's when we start to feel overwhelmed. But I want to encourage you. You can and should create this quiet space to meet with the Lord. Get things right with Him, because when your identity and approval comes from him, you remain grounded no matter what life throws your way. Now if you're in a season with a lot of work, this requires a restructuring of your days. I love taking time to ground my heart first thing in the morning, right when I wake up.

What this looks like for me: I start off by spending two minutes-ish in silence, just completely quiet, drinking my coffee. Listening, connecting with the Lord, calming my heart. I read scripture and then I think about what it means to me. I write in my journal my honest thoughts, where I am in my heart, what tasks I will greet that day at home and in work, and I proclaim what I want God to do through me that day. I write down what I feel like He's speaking to me, whether it's morning or evening. It's up to you to treat this like an appointment that you can't miss. Grounding your heart and spirit is vital to living a life of calm in the chaos.

Now, I want you to keep this in mind too: you can ground your heart in Jesus at any moment. If you're in a season with young babies, forget about establishing that rhythm. I was just in this season, and literally I would take one Bible verse, maybe even one word, and just meditate on that the entire day. Just make it simple. Say that word over and over again. Pray that one Bible verse over your babies, your work, and your life. Know that grounding your heart is something that you can choose to do at any moment of any day. You could hit pause right now, take a deep breath, and connect with the Lord and ground your heart now, if you haven't yet today.

NUMBER TWO: PRIORITIZE WELL

Now listen, I'm the most guilty person of being super efficient at all the things that I shouldn't be doing right now, because it makes me feel good. I'm really good at it. I can answer some emails or unload the dishwasher really fast, but ultimately I get more overwhelmed because I'm behind on what's most important. You know what I'm talking about. What are your go-to things that you do when you want to be efficient but not super effective? Maybe you're really good at folding the laundry or... I don't know, whatever it is, you know you're putting off the hard thing. You know you're putting off the work, the most important work that needs to be done today. Peter Drucker said,

"Efficiency is doing things right, but effectiveness is doing the right things."

So how does this shake out daily for you? Listen closely, because this is so simple, but it's also really hard. All right? Choose your top three priorities for the day every morning, and then stick with them. So whether it's a work day, a momma day, a rest day, it doesn't matter. Just choose your top three priorities for that day. On the days that I stop at the beginning of my day and I set those three priorities and work towards them before anything else, I go to bed satisfied knowing, "Hey, I did my best to accomplish the most important work for that day." Sometimes I don't get to all three priorities, but it's better to try to than to feel like you were aiming at nothing and just getting through the day. So that's it. Three priorities every morning, every day. Now if you start your day with healthy prioritization doing the right things, you'll end your day feeling joyful and satisfied and much less overwhelmed, even if the dishwasher is still full.

NUMBER THREE: BLOCK YOUR TIME

Now, shortly after you decide your three priorities, plan your day in one hour, two hour, or three hour blocks. This maximizes your time and effectiveness. So for example, this morning I planned to have my morning routine for 20 minutes. With a little baby, that's all I get this day. Before I had babies, I used to like an hour or an hour and a half. It was so nice. But with my sleep and our schedule right now, 20 minutes. I wanted to create new content or do deep work for two hours, then answer emails for one hour. And that's all before lunch. How amazing would it feel for you to have an entire day with focus like that?

So I want to pause for just a second. There's something that you need to know. These hour blocks are a track to run on. It's really good to block your time for the day, but you have to know that there are going to be interruptions. That is life and you can't freak out when that happens. Things are going to pop up, they're going to throw you off your plan, and that is fine. A meeting's going to be canceled, a baby's going to get sick, something will come up. But when you block your time, you eliminate that "life is chaos" kind of feeling because you simply are telling life what to do rather than the other way around. Blocking your time is about happening to your day instead of your day happening to you. It's about being thoughtful and proactive. It puts you in the driver's seat of your day. So you can even do crazy things like block off two hours to be outdoors with no phone. I don't know about you, but that sounds really brave and

really wonderful. Choose to block your day with diligent work and life-giving activities. Because the result is always going to be feeling caught up on what's important and having a schedule full of calming, fruitful activities.

NUMBER FOUR: KILL MULTITASKING

Listen, my husband's going to be the first one to tell you I am terrible at multitasking. I don't have that gift, so for those of you who are like, "I'm really good at multitasking," I'm not in your boat but I do want you to listen in. I truly believe that multitasking is a source of a lot of the chaos in our lives. In a culture where we really can't put a phone down, our minds are being rewired to do two to three things at once all the time. So I want you to kill multitasking. Be relentless. Try to focus on one thing at a time, because this is key. When you do all the things all the time, you end your day thinking, "What the heck did I do today? Like what did I actually accomplish?" But when you do one thing at a time and you give your full attention to it, you feel accomplished. You feel balanced. You feel like one by one, you're giving your attention to the things that matter most to you.

So most of us, like I said, we kind of wear multitasking as a badge of honor, especially us moms. But really, it's not multitasking, it's task-switching, and it slows us down. It slows down our productivity. Think about the momentum that you lose when you switch back and forth in your brain and in what you're doing. There's all kinds of research to back this, but when you think of multitasking, I want you to remember this quote by Jim Elliot: "*Wherever you are, be all there.*" Multitasking steals the gift of undivided attention. This goes for time with your spouse, your kids, when you're at work, when you're alone. If you multitask, you're robbing yourself of sweet, uninterrupted time to be all there, eyes locked, 100% there. One of my favorite Bible verses is Psalm 86:11 and it says, "*Give me an undivided heart that I may fear you.*" So, friend, be undivided in your heart, in your mind, in your attention. Be all there.

NUMBER FIVE: EMBRACE THE GIFT OF BOUNDARIES

Healthy boundaries hold all of this together. Now what's the easiest illustration of a boundary? I think a fence, right? It shows you the boundary line of your yard or your land. It's a beautiful illustration because it keeps the good in: your family, your garden, your home, your belongings; and it keeps the bad out, right? Outsiders, strangers, potential danger, the rest of the world. When setting boundaries in your life, in your home, the goal is not to keep the chaos out, right? Oftentimes, the chaos is found in our midst. It's in the middle of our homes. It's in our family. It's in our work, our schedules. It's just part of our lives. But the goal, while it's not to keep the chaos out, the goal is to keep the calm in. Keeping the calm, peaceful, unshakeable demeanor that we crave takes time and attention and setting healthy boundaries is key to this.

So make an appointment with yourself and God daily to ground your heart. That goes back to

number one, right? Set three priorities. That's number two. That's another boundary. Block your time. That's a time boundary. Say no to distractions and multitasking. That's another boundary. Once you continue to set these good boundaries, it keeps the calm in and that overwhelmed feeling out. A few other practical boundaries that I love and implement in my own life? Keeping my email inbox closed until I'm active in it and setting aside one to two hours a day just to do emails and not looking at it the rest of the day. Taking one hour a day, one day a week, and one week a month off of social media has really helped me stay calm and stay grounded. Setting aside one day a week for rest, for Sabbath. Not answering every phone call that comes my way. Listen, this is brave. This is different. The things and the habits and boundaries that you embrace in your life, it feels counter-cultural. But I just want to speak the truth that it is possible. And it's possible for you.

So here's what I want you to do, okay? Try it for a week. One week. Ground your heart. Prioritize well. Block your time. Kill multitasking. And set solid, good boundaries for one week. Then see if your life feels less chaotic, less overwhelming, and a little bit more calm. My guess is that it will.

Thanks for listening to Episode 10 of Work and Play with Nancy Ray.

Everything I've mentioned today can be found in the show notes at nancyray.com/podcast/10, including your free download. And you can find me at nancyray.com or follow me @nancyray on Instagram or Facebook almost daily. Now I'm going to close with a favorite quote by Matt Perman, author of one of my favorite books, *What's Best Next*:

"You are satisfied with your day when there is a match between what you value and how you spend your time."

Thanks for listening, and I'll see you next time.