

Episode: Beating Overwhelm



With Natalie Bacon, JD, CFP[®], Certified Life Coach

Full Episode Transcript

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Welcome to the Design Your Dream Life podcast, where it's all about designing your life on your terms and now your host, Natalie Bacon.

Hey, welcome back. I'm so excited to talk with you today. I am getting all settled in in my apartment in Chicago where I have just recently moved. I moved from Columbus, Ohio. I'm originally from Cleveland and because I can live from anywhere, I have always wanted to live in a big city and now I have the opportunity to do so because of my online business.

So I moved to Chicago and let me tell you that the process of moving out of state while running your own business and everything that goes with that was something that could have spun me out. It was so many actions and so many things that I needed to do. And I just want to use this as an example to talk about overwhelmed today because a lot of times we find ourselves indulging in overwhelm when we don't have to. And if we can kind of learn how to think about all of the things going on in our lives differently, we can stay out of overwhelm.

So let me just tell you a few of the things that I had to do to, you know, move out of state. First of all, I visited Chicago and I almost moved to Dallas by the way. I visited Chicago and I made sure that this is where I wanted to move. I had to go see apartments. I had to decide on an apartment, apply sign the lease. I had to get new renters insurance. Um, I had to get new car insurance.

I had to get, you know, my tax returns and send them over for proof of income. Since I'm a business owner now I had to sell a bunch of furniture that I had in a storage unit. I had to move from my apartment to my cousins, um, to my new apartment. I had to convince people to meet me at my storage unit to buy the stuff.

And at the time my storage unit was being blocked. Um, it was a construction zone. I'm laughing now because it was seriously, I was just like, I had to laugh because you just want any something to go like right. And it's just like everything was just one thing after the other, but I really did not get overwhelmed by it. You know?

I was scheduling movers, I had to get a new accountant, I had to meet with my new accountant. I had to move my business, which required applying for a license out of state, getting the money order, getting new health insurance. I'm self-insured. I had to pack up all my stuff. I had to sign up for, you know, all of the utilities. I had to lift a credit freeze to make that happen. You know, all of the family and friends that I wanted to see before I left Ohio.

Then once I got to Chicago I needed to unpack, get new furniture, start you know, networking and making new friends in the city. I have friends in the suburbs and here, but finding other people in the city is on my high priority list. I had to update all of my addresses from all of my personal financial and business accounts. And I'm also running a business at the same time.

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So producing content, creating courses, you know, making sure my images are good for Pinterest and Instagram and sending newsletters and replying to emails and managing customer service. I am a one man show right now. So I do all of this. I just stay on top of my accounting and my receipts and the tech side of things and you know, continue to update my email sequences in marketing and then actually sell my courses and make some money.

Um, and you know, prioritizing work. And at the time I was also working part time for The Life Coach School to get into a coaching program. So it was just a lot of things. Right. And then as soon as I moved to Chicago, the week after I was going to coach training and then the week after that I was going to FINN con, which is a finance conference for media and bloggers. So all of that is just to say that I had a ton of things that I needed to do, right?

The list was long, just like, I'm sure your list is long, but I have studied personal development so much that I refused to indulge in overwhelm. I did not allow myself to freak out and I instead I just focused on managing my mind and I, I made the conscious choice to do this ahead of time, not to get stressed out or overwhelmed and just look at the facts and separate out the facts from my thoughts about the facts, right?

All the circumstances are neutral. All these facts are just neutral. It's my thoughts about the facts that make it dramatic or overwhelming. So there are things that happen and then there are the thoughts you choose to have about those things that happen. So overwhelm really does not have to be a part of your life.

When I'm talking about overwhelm, I'm talking about the feeling that you kind of spin into when you're saying like, I'm just too busy. It's just too much. I just can't handle it. I'm so overwhelmed right now. I'm exhausted. Overwhelm is kind of laced with self pity. And I say this because it's really self pity is really hard to identify because no one wants to say that they're indulging in self pity, but there's always like a sense of self pity with overwhelmed. Like it's hard and it shouldn't be this hard and you kind of feel sorry for yourself.

And I used to be the queen of self pity and I'm not anymore thankfully because I'm aware of. And self pity is just when you're kind of self absorbed and unhappy and dwelling on your own problems, overwhelm is a completely indulgent emotion. It's not useful and it's not necessary and it's actually not caused by your circumstances, which I know that you want it to be.

So you have someone to blame for your emotions or at least that's been my experience. But it's actually really great news that it is this way because it means that you can change it and you don't have to feel so overwhelmed. Overwhelm is just something that you're causing by the way that you are thinking. So your brain is programmed to seek pleasure, avoid pain and be efficient. This has kept us evolving. It's kept us alive as humans up to this point.

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But we're at a point in evolution where the brain doesn't know what to do because we have so many decisions more than ever before. You just think about the number of options in the grocery store. It is like insane, right? Think about the career choices you have. You basically can have anything you want in your life like and the amount of decisions that you make in a single day compared to the way it used to be is so much.

So this is the first time in history. We have so many options and our brain freaks out about it. And this isn't bad. It just means that we need to train our brain to deal with it all. We need to just become more disciplined. And the way that we do this is to decide ahead of time what we're going to do because options aren't going anywhere.

We're just going to have more and more options in modern society. Right? And this is fantastic because you can be anything you want to be. You can eat anything you want to eat, you can do anything that you want to do but too much of something isn't what's causing the overwhelm. It's the way that you think about what it is that you have the option to do that causes the overwhelm.

It's just simply having undisciplined thoughts so I want to give you some strategies for letting go of the overwhelm and I have seven for you that I think will really help you manage your mind so that you don't fall into overwhelm and they are working for me, and I'm not saying that it's super easy, but the point is to practice this so that you train your brain to stay out of overwhelm. Okay?

The first one is just to decide that you're not going to indulge in overwhelm. I talk about useful and non useful feelings in my course. Design Your Dream Life Academy where I explained that your thoughts create your feelings, your feelings create your actions and your actions create your results. And there are useful emotions and non useful emotions.

Doesn't matter if they're not going to repositve. They can go either way. Overwhelm is a negative emotion that is also not useful. So contrast this with like sadness, which is a negative emotion that is useful, right? You want to feel sad when something you interpret happens in the world that's sad. Someone dies or something disappoints you, anything like that. But overwhelm is a negative emotion that's not useful. Like it doesn't produce a useful result. And a lot of times we think that it does. We think that, you know, not deciding and staying in, I don't know and confusion is useful and it makes for a better decision, but it just keeps you stuck and overwhelmed.

When you take action, even if it's the wrong action, you learn from it and then you'll take different action in the future. But staying in overwhelm keeps you stuck. So whenever I had something come up for the move that I didn't plan on, like the storage unit road being closed and I'm trying to sell stuff from the internet, Craigslist and Facebook marketplace, I just refuse to indulge in confusion and overwhelm.

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I refuse to feel sorry for myself and I just decided that like one way or another it was going to get done and it was going to be fine. Even though this isn't the way that I wanted it to happen, I just refused to indulge in overwhelm and it made the experience so much better because the result was that it did work out. It worked out just fine and I could have indulged in so much more overwhelmed throughout that whole process and it wouldn't have changed the result. Okay.

The second step is to put rules in your life that are called constraints that reduce the number of options that you have because if you train your brain to consider fewer options, you will automatically stay out of overwhelm. If you consider all the options, you'll never take action. There are just too many options.

I love to wear neutrals and it's not because I don't like color. I actually really enjoy color. I love pink and teal and all the colors, but I'm telling you, I keep a neutral wardrobe intentionally because I like to look nice. I like, um, clothes and by putting a constraint in my life have only neutrals. I only buy certain things that all look nice together.

They fit my style of kind of being like simple and classic and polished and I don't get overwhelmed and I don't indulge in all of the options whenever I want to buy something. Another example is with food. I have constraints in my life with food where I don't eat certain things and you already do this with constraint, right? There's food you don't like and so you just don't eat them. That's a constraint.

Well, when you do this intentionally to limit the options for any area of your life, it just makes your life easier and simpler and the fewer options you have, the less likely you are to indulge in overwhelm. It's actually really, really great. Your brain might not like this at first. It's going to freak out like a FOMO, fear of missing out will set in, but don't listen your brain, it doesn't know how to limit the option and it wants to go into overwhelm.

But anywhere where you can put rules in your life and limit your options, you're doing your future self a favor by avoiding the overwhelm. It really does work. And I love the clothing example cause that has been a really big game changer for me and just not kind of getting overwhelmed by clothes and the stuff in my house. Okay.

The third step is to make decisions and take action. Once you have your options limited, you have to choose and then you have to take action. You have to do this. Even aware there is resistance, which is, Oh I don't know, a hundred percent of the time you have to support your decision long enough to where you're going to take action because if you choose to second guess yourself without following through, you'll never know what the result would be and then you'll never get the results and it just reinforces the overwhelm that you originally felt.

So making decisions and taking action is what prevents overwhelm. So I had resistance, so much resistance about moving. Like when I had originally decided I was super excited, I knew it was

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the right choice. But as soon as I started taking action, there was so much resistance. Was I making the right decision or what about Dallas? What about New York city? What about San Francisco? Why Chicago? Everyone wants to know, should I stay? Why am I leaving at all? What about money? Will I make enough? Is my business successful enough?

Like all the thoughts. Okay, all of the thoughts, but I am telling you that when you train your brain to honor your commitments, to make decisions and to take action, you can remove so much of that chatter. And the more that you do this, the more that you will trust yourself and kind of repeat the process of making decisions and taking action, which will lead to the results that you want in your life. So make decisions and take action.

The fourth step is to make an action list of all the things you need to do and then put them on your calendar. This was actually like the secret sauce for my move and transition because I decided to create an entire list of everything that I needed to do and get done. Like every single thing from like getting the money orders, to getting the paperwork to register my business in Illinois, to signing up for health insurance, to getting a storage unit, to closing the storage unit to selling stuff like everything.

The list was so long I created it in Evernote because I just love Evernote. It's free, but you can do this anywhere, anywhere you want to make a list. But the point is is that you just make a list of all the things that you need to do and then you put every single action on your calendar.

I am telling you, this is what made the difference because I didn't just look at the list, right? Cause that could, you know, give me an opportunity to indulge in overwhelm. Instead. What I did was I put every single action on my calendar so I knew what I had to do every single day in order for it to happen by the time that I wanted it to happen. Did things come up and have to get moved around? Yes, but honestly, very rarely this massive action list was the key to me being able to trust the process and not indulge in overwhelm. Okay.

Number five is to schedule your priorities first and everyone else's second. I think this is the secret to leading your own life intentionally, and it's not just to keep you out of overwhelm, but it does work here as well. This is a way for you to be proactive instead of reactive. It means that you have to say no to other people. It's not easy. It's not fun, but it is the right thing to do. I find this hard when I get, um, interview requests a lot. I want to do them right.

Even podcast episodes. I want to say yes to all of the things, but that means that I have to say no to things that I want to do. So I have a pretty hard rule that I schedule at least two weeks out and that might end up going to four weeks out because I want to make sure that I have everything that I want to do scheduled first and everyone else's coming second. And this allows me to just not get overwhelmed by all of the invitations and requests and opportunities that come up. I make sure that my priorities are first and everyone else's are second. Okay.

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The sixth way to not being overwhelmed is to measure productivity based on results. And this means that you stop measuring how much activity you're doing and you only measure what you're producing. So for example, instead of saying, uh, working on my online business or working on my blog during a certain amount of time on your calendar, you only measure what you're producing during that time.

So you have scheduled from 6 to 8:30 PM write one blog post and that is what you expect to produce. There's no drama around it. There's no activity of being busy or feeling overwhelmed. It's just get it done and this really, really helps. It was really big game changer for me. I've only been doing this in the last year and it's made a world of difference because if I can't come up with what I've produced in that day or week or whatever it is, and I'm feeling overwhelmed, I know it's my mind and that I need to go back to Mike calendar and my plan and see what I'm not scheduling appropriately. I always look at what I'm producing and that is how I make sure I am not indulging in overwhelm.

And this goes into the final step, which is to separate out the facts of from the drama, which are the thoughts that you're having about the facts. And I kind of to this a little bit earlier, but just whenever you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, I want you to just take a minute and write down why you think you're feeling overwhelmed and even if it's just for five or 10 minutes and then I want you to go through that, you know, writing and I want you to look and ask yourself what are the facts?

And then I want you to ask yourself, what are the thoughts? And I'm laughing because you will find like three facts and you will find 30 thoughts, right? It's, um, even that list that I started with in the beginning of this episode was just full of facts, right?

It's just the list of things that I have to do. It's the thoughts about those facts that are going to make them filled with drama and overwhelm or not. Cause there's nothing inherently busy or overwhelming about them. It's just the thoughts that we have about all of those activities. So what I've done is I've really not only managed my mind, but I've made sure I've managed my words.

I don't say I'm overwhelmed. I don't say I'm busy and if I find myself thinking that I am, that I know I need to go back to my calendar, look at what's going on and decide if I need to move things around. Or if I'm not giving myself enough buffer room and space breathing room on my calendar or if I am just mismanaging my mind and creating drama when there doesn't need to be any drama because it's just a list of things that I need to do.

And the final tip here, it's kind of like a bonus tip because it's not really a step in the process, but it's so important that you really, really get some good people around you that are really supportive. Not everyone in your life is going to understand what you're doing and that's okay. Like I really want you to know that so many people reach out to me, they're starting businesses and their friends or family don't understand like that's okay.

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They don't need to understand. They won't be the people who are going to support you the most and they might superficially support you, right? They want you to succeed. And all that, but they don't really get it. And that's okay. You just need to find at least one other person or maybe a small group of people who do understand it. And that means you might have to make some new friends or include new people in your circle.

Because when you think you are feeling overwhelmed, when you think you are having a lot on your plate, if you can manage your own mind and also get support from other people during the process, it will make your life so much better because you feel like you're surrounding yourself with people who get it, which has been so important for me. And it's allowed me to maintain my relationships with people who aren't doing what I'm doing while still feeling completely supported by everyone else who've I've made new relationships with, who are doing what I'm doing.

And it's just been really, really helpful during this process. So I just want to offer to you that you don't have to indulge in overwhelm anymore. It can feel useful. It can feel like it means that you're leading a full life and that you need to, you know, indulge in overwhelm because you have so much going on. But indulging in overwhelm doesn't make you feel good. Right?

No one's like I feel overwhelmed. I feel great. You feel terrible when you feel overwhelmed and your thoughts cause your feelings so the circumstances are not causing your feelings. So use these steps in this episode to eliminate overwhelm. Because when you eliminate overwhelm from your life and you manage your mind and you take action and manage your calendar and you live intentionally, you will have so much more positive emotion even despite all the obstacles that come up.

So I invite you to take this week off from feeling overwhelmed and you can join my free Design Your Dream Life training by going to Nataliebacon.com/dreamlifetraining. That is one word, Nataliebacon.com/dreamlifetraining. To get more of this, make it an amazing overwhelm-free a week and I will talk to you soon. Bye bye.

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