

How to Avoid Overwhelm: A Guide to Starting and Staying Centered All Day



by Barbara Churchill

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Introduction

I know what you're thinking right now. You're thinking that you have too much to do already and adding one more thing to your "To Do" or "Should" list will put you over the top.

That's exactly why you need to keep reading.

I've so been there.

Does this sound familiar: Up at 6 a.m. and grab your phone – before you even open your eyes - to start digesting the emails that found me while I was sleeping. Get the kids up early enough so they can eat breakfast. Make lunches as I scarf cold cereal, which gets soggy because I stopped to put a load of laundry in. Get the kids on the bus, run in, shower. Send a few emails as my hair dries. Pack workout clothes so I can make an appearance at the gym after work. Then, I'm out the door, exhausted before I even get to work.

Oh, did I mention that I grabbed some kind of meat from the freezer for dinner? I will figure out what do to with it when I get home. Right. Dinner. Ugh!

Pause. Take a breath.

Ahh, that's better.

When I think back to how I used to “live” my life, is it any wonder I felt burnt out?

But what if I told you there is a simple way to start your day that will ensure you never feel burnt out again? All it takes is 5 minutes. And it has *nothing* to do with caffeine.

“

You don't need more time. You just need to decide. ~ Seth Godin.

Now do I have your attention?

Creating a new habit is about taking little steps – not the big over-the-top actions that never last. It's about deciding that you want to be different and live differently. You DO have more time in your day, even if it's just 5 minutes. Everyone can find 5 minutes, right?

I'm offering you **5 Simple Ways to Start Your Day to Avoid Overwhelm**, which will transform the way your day unfolds.

Are you in?

About Barbara Churchill

Barbara Churchill is a master certified leadership coach and speaker specialized in helping high-achieving female leaders and entrepreneurs build their confidence and embrace their leadership skills in order to advance their careers and income.

Creator of the Lead It Real™ leadership coaching program, Barbara has been mentoring working women for over 25 years. Having overcome many personal obstacles while she built three successful businesses herself with seven-figure revenues, she has learned what it takes to conquer self-doubt and create a strong confidence mindset. Her clients include Microsoft, General Mills, and The Toro Company.



As an engaging and inspiring speaker, Barbara can be found on a in the board room, women's conferences or on a college campus sharing her messages of leadership development, worthiness and empowerment. A frequent television guest in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, Barbara has been featured on several podcasts and in StarTribune, Renew Everyday and Good Enough Mother. Barbara shares her life with her husband and three adult children in Minneapolis.

Barbara believes every woman should have permission to be themselves and writes regularly about embracing imperfection, tuning out the noisy world and trusting intuition. She also leads retreats that help women unplug from the frenzy of daily life and reconnect with their worthiness and inner wisdom. She invites you to take a moment to breathe and meet her at BarbaraChurchill.com.

Daily Start # 1 ~ Breathe

“ When you arise in the morning, think of what a precious privilege it is to be alive - to breathe, to think, to enjoy, to love. ~ Marcus Aurelius

Have you ever noticed how you breathe? This sounds so simple, doesn't it? But for most people breathing is not something they focus on. They typically take short, chest breaths throughout their day. When they feel stressed, well, let's just say, breathing is the last thing people think about.

I want to change that for you, so here's my suggestion. The moment you open your eyes in the morning I want you to take a deep breathe through your nose and exhale it through your mouth. Do this 3 or 4 times. Fill your belly first, then your chest while you inhale. Hold the breath for just a second and then exhale, emptying the chest and then gradually the belly. I know this is very different from chest breathing. It's better for the mind and body—more relaxing, too. Be present as you exhale all that lovely air, and feel how calm you are. Breathing is so important in calming your mind and clearing your thinking.

Do this throughout the day; before entering a meeting, paying bills or anytime you start to feel stressed. Notice the difference it makes in how you feel.



Daily Start # 2 - Daily Reading

“

Life transforming ideas have always come to me through books. ~ Bell Hooks

There are so many daily reading books out there to choose from, which makes this step super easy to do. I have 5 books in a basket next to my bed, along with a pair of my eyeglasses, so I can stay warm under the covers and read something wonderful.

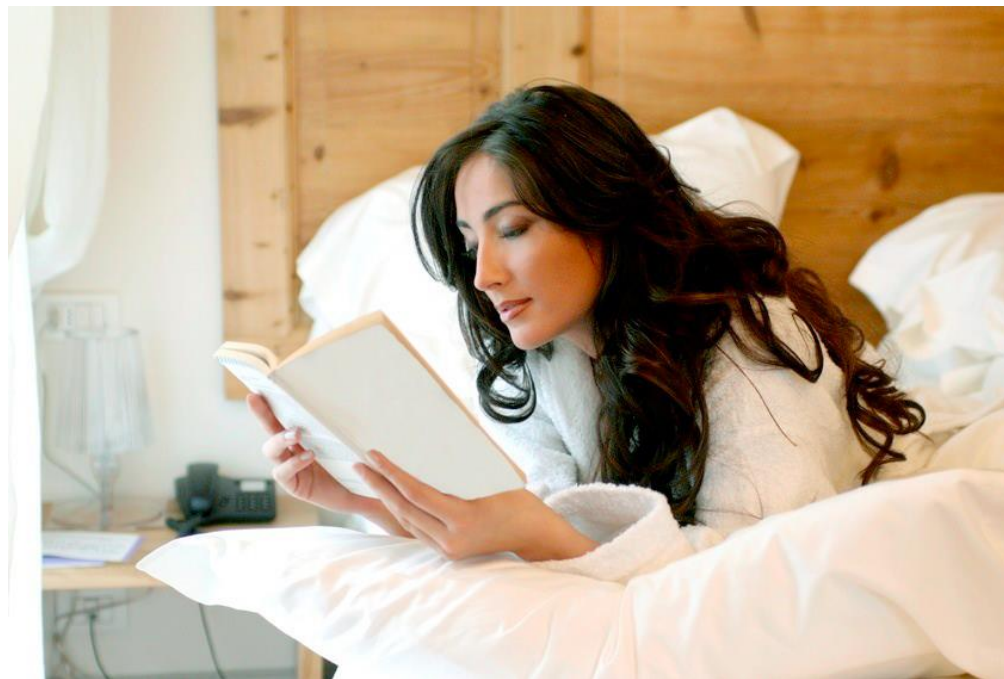
Stop by your local bookstore and browse through them to see which one speaks to you. These are NOT “Self Help” or “How To” guides – no homework involved here. Choose one that uplifts you or that speaks to what is important to you, personally. Some of my favorite authors are Byron Katie, Louise Hay, Dr. Wayne Dyer, Karen Casey, Dr. Maya Angelou and Melodie Beattie. Have fun choosing just the right book for yourself.

Keep one or two at home and bring one to work, so you can have access to its wisdom during the day. I like to laugh a lot and I find the humorous books to be especially good in a work environment.

Daily Start # 2 ~ Daily Reading

A special note – Make sure you get a real book and don't download a copy to your iPad or Kindle or phone. You are bombarded each day with electronics. You don't need to expose yourself in this precious "you" time to that electronic energy. It can undo the peaceful feeling the reading is meant to create.

I know – books are so 90's, but there's something about picking up a good book that is comforting and makes me smile. I'm going to invite you to put down your electronic device and go old-school.



Daily Start # 3 - Ask for Help

“ When you’re drowning, you don’t say ‘I would be incredibly pleased if someone would have the foresight to notice me drowning and come and help me.’ You just scream. ~ John Lennon

I know this is going to be a hard one for you. After all, you handle so much in any given day and do a pretty good job of getting everything done that you’ve been asked to do.

Really?

Then how come you’re so exhausted?

Most of us don’t know how to ask for help or recognize that we even need to ask. We keep giving and trying to figure things out on our own.

Everyone needs a little help.

Yes, even you.



Daily Start # 3 ~ Ask for help

Think about the last time someone asked you for help. You were so eager to lend a helping hand and do whatever they needed, right?

And didn't you feel great afterward? Wasn't it a wonderful feeling to know you lightened the load for a friend or colleague?

So why not give that gift to someone you know – friend, co-worker, family member. You can even go straight to the top by asking your Higher Power for guidance with a problem at home or issue at work.

Ask for help in keeping you dedicated to your exercise commitment. Ask for help remembering to pick up a birthday card for your mother. Ask for help in being a more patient parent (I had teenagers, so I used this one a lot!). Ask for help in making dinner or paying bills or grocery shopping or a project at work or...

Ask for help to breathe – in and out – to stay calm.

Just ask.

Daily Start # 4 - Gratitude

“ Gratitude is not just a state of mind – it’s a state of being. It is not just a thought which originates in the mind, but a feeling that resonates in the body and soul. ~ Barbara Churchill

I could write volumes on this one topic.

That’s how important it is to setting the tone for your day, and your life.

Being grateful for what you have sends a message out to the Universe that says, “Thank you for that, and I want more of it.” I’m not talking about material stuff, although there is a place for being grateful for a warm place to live and enough food to eat.



I’m talking about the big (and little) things – health, relationships, a new opportunity, the smell of spring in the air, the sound of children laughing. Acknowledge and appreciate the things of which a great life is made.

Daily Start # 4 ~ Gratitude

You can write it in a journal. I have a gratitude Journal next to my bed and I write five things in it before I go to sleep. I learned this years ago from a wonderful woman, Sarah Ban Breathnach, who wrote a marvelous book called, "Simple Abundance". I have kept each journal and occasionally go back and read what I've written.

It's a wonderful way to look back and see how life has changed, but that some things stay the same.

If writing isn't your thing, you can keep it simple. Just list a couple things in your head before you get out of bed. "Thank you for the sunshine today and for freshly brewed coffee."

Notice what putting a smile on your face first thing in the morning can do for your outlook.

During the day, try to keep in mind a couple of things for which you are thankful. Write them on a Post-It note and stick it to your computer at work and set a timer on your phone to show them every hour.

Continuing to say thank you will do wonders for how you feel about yourself, your family and friends, your life.

Daily Start # 5 - Be Still

“ Within you there is a stillness and a sanctuary to which you can retreat at any time and be yourself. ~ Hermann Hesse

Some people will call this meditation and others call it “going within. Regardless of what you call it, I invite you to try it. Really. You can do this. Just try it.

Close your eyes and be still. Take one of those deep breaths you learned about in Daily Start #1.

B-r-e-a-t-h-e. Try not to focus on your thoughts. Let them just float by without paying any attention. Keep your eyes closed (no fair looking at the clock to see how long you’ve been doing this!).

Lie still and simply be.

This will be a challenge for some of you because you have been conditioned that you should always be “doing” something.

Rest assured; lying still is doing something.

Let yourself become a sponge and absorb the loving, caring stillness you’re experiencing. Take a vacation from your exhausting thought patterns and dip a toe into the pool of the present.

Daily Start # 5 ~ Be Still

Just be.

Now open your eyes and notice how you feel. Has your “monkey mind” been tamed a bit?

Do you feel more centered and able to take on what’s waiting for you on the other side of your bedroom door?

Good. I’m glad.



A Few More Suggestions

I'm going to suggest a couple more things that won't take any time to do, but will take a commitment on your part: DON'T TURN ON THE TV. That's right. No morning news programs. No reading the paper. Talk about a buzz kill!

There is nothing redeeming or uplifting in either of those media sources. The information they hold doesn't add any benefits to your day. In fact, TV and other media outlets subtract the positive flow of energy you started just a few short minutes ago. If you must check your email, then go ahead. Just take a couple deep breaths before you dive in.

On your commute to work, choose some calming music to listen to. Have fun scoping out a new podcast or download some new music that will keep "road rage" at bay. We spend many hours a week getting to and from work. Why not enjoy the ride?

Since our sense of smell is so powerful, I suggest diffusing some lavender or chamomile essential oils in your home and office. The aroma is divine and the calming properties are a gift.

That's it. Simple, right?



Barbara Churchill Coaching

I invite you to choose just one practice to start. Why bite off more than you can chew? Simply commit to yourself that you will practice just one of the suggestions above every morning before you get out of bed. Look at the list and choose the one that resonates with you the most. Do it consistently for 2 weeks.

Notice how different your days become – and how different *you* become.

I've been doing this ritual for over 16 years, and it has made such a difference in my life. Every once in a while, when my kids were younger, I'd bolt out of bed and hit the ground running, forgoing my morning ritual. My kids notice the difference in me right away. My daughter usually sent me back to my room to "do that meditating thing."

You've got nothing to lose but stressful starts to your mornings. What are you waiting for?

Do you *really* need permission to take 5 minutes for yourself?

Ok, permission is officially granted. I hereby give you permission to start putting yourself first every morning. I give you permission to wake up and immediately take care of yourself before you go out and care for the world.

I give you permission to fill your cup first - every day.