

## Ep #18: Managing Stress and Overwhelm



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Nicole Symcox**

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## Ep #18: Managing Stress and Overwhelm

It's difficult for us to have enough energy to feel good, be happy, and be present, okay. Additionally, if you have any emotional wounding in the area of control, stress is likely going to be a trigger for you. So, in other words, if you're someone who likes to be in control all the time or feels out of control all the time, such as feeling chaotic inside, stress will likely be a trigger for you because it's going to hit you in the area of wanting and needing control over things.

Welcome to *Mental Health Remix*, a show for ambitious humans who are ready to feel, think, and be different. If you want to stop struggling with perfectionism, build better relationships, and connect with yourself and your potential, this is the place for you...

Here's your host, educator, coach and licensed psychotherapist, Nicole Symcox...

Hey, hey, everyone. Welcome to episode number 18. Today, we are talking about how to manage stress and overwhelm. So, you won't be surprised at how I'm going to start this episode out, but managing stress is just like everything else in your life. Managing stress is largely about the story you are telling yourself and your emotional response to that story.

So, for some people, stress is a major trigger, mainly because, when we are stressed out, we are putting all this internal pressure on ourselves to get things done, to get things done well and get things done quickly, a lot of the time. And thus, it creates a lot of stress. And then we get overwhelmed because we almost set up these impossible standards for ourselves, so then our brain starts to get really overwhelmed.

And so when we are telling ourselves a stress story, we are telling our body and our brain that everything is urgent, everything matters, and everything has to go just right. And, of course, that just right is something we've imagined. Like, we have an idea of how we would like things to play out and how we would like things to go.

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And so basically this summarizes in our minds, whether or not we know it, is, “I need to be in control of these things. I need to make sure that things turn out right or terrible things will happen.” Do you see how we start telling ourselves a story? And a lot of times we don’t even realize it. Like, we just get consumed with time management and getting tasks done that we don’t always realize what’s happening in the background.

And all of this stuff that’s happening in the background is going to increase your stress levels. All this stress and pressure is going to put your body in survival mode, which is going to add to your stress levels. So this is a vicious cycle that gets started really quick. Do you guys kind of see that?

So, once your body is in survival mode, cortisol is going to kick up and your body will be on high alert for potential threats. And anytime we put our brains and our bodies in survival mode, we are unconsciously scanning for potential threats.

So naturally, my friends, our anxiety is going to go up, our ability to sleep is going to go down, and focusing on one thing becomes really difficult because we have so much background noise, and we tend to feel pretty irritable and on edge because we’re constantly telling ourselves a story that we don’t have time or we have too much to do.

So our relationships can suffer because we don’t have the emotional bandwidth for it because we are so stressed out and engaged in this stress story. Because so much energy is going out to protect us from potential threats based on this unconscious survival story we’re telling ourselves, it’s difficult for us to have enough energy to feel good, be happy, and be present.

Additionally, if you have any emotional wounding in the area of control, stress is likely going to be a trigger for you. So, in other words, if you’re someone who likes to be in control all the time or feels out of control all the time, such as feeling chaotic inside, stress will likely be a trigger for you

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because it's going to hit you in the area of wanting and needing control over things.

So I know, this is kind of deep, huh? You thought your problem was just time management and getting things done, and it turns out there's a whole lot more to it than that. And your answer to this, my friends, is to learn how to manage your mind so you don't get too far down the rabbit hole, metaphorically speaking, of course.

You have to learn how to manage your mind when you are stressed out and manage the stories you are telling yourself. It is the thing that will make the biggest difference when you are stressed. Otherwise, you will default to whatever thoughts come your way.

And let me tell you, without some reframing and training our brains to be different it ain't going to be pretty. It's more than likely going to be negative because our brains have a negativity bias in order to keep you alive and filter through potential threats. So, left on our own, our thoughts are pretty negative for the most part.

So you have to be an active participant in changing your thoughts. They don't magically change on their own. You have to put forth some strategic effort in the beginning. Your brain will catch on. The more you create this as a habit for yourself, changing your thoughts and changing the stories you tell yourself, the more automatic they become over time, just like anything else.

Anytime you are learning a new skill set of any kind, it's always more effortful in the beginning. And then, as you get in the groove of it and it becomes habit, you start doing it with less effort and you start defaulting to more positive thoughts. So, I would invite you to consider, changing your thoughts is really no different than changing any other habit in your life.

You have to employ the same level of commitment, same level of support in the beginning, and you have to actively participate in it until it becomes more natural. And yes, it is totally possible for it to become more natural.

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Alright, so, let's change the story before we even get there. Like, let's intercept this before we default to negative thinking or negative stories. So here's what to keep in mind when you're trying to do that.

When it comes to control, which we now know is largely the root issue of stress, okay, largely the root issue of stress tends to lie within control. We're trying to control the future or we're trying to control other people, or we're trying to control ourselves. A lot of times, when we're really stressed and overwhelmed, we're kind of wrestling with ourselves in those three areas, but what we see, what we tangibly see is a to-do list. What we tangibly see are people not doing what we want them to do. What we see is ourselves not following our schedule.

But emotionally, a lot of times – not all the time but many times – the root is in control. And so when it comes to control, we only have 50% of it. And that's us. We cannot control every external factor out there or every person's actions. Okay, so let's just set up some realistic expectations here.

And this is a good thing, my friends. It is good to only have 50%. Can you imagine how overwhelming it would be if I said in this episode that you could control everything and everybody around you? That would actually be wild. So, this is a good thing because managing your own 50% is a fulltime job.

Most of us barely have enough time or emotional bandwidth to manage our own internal shit, much less others. So, stay in your own lane, manage yourself, and let go of the rest. You will feel more empowered, you will feel more present, and as a result, you will probably feel less stressed out.

So, let's give you some tools to manage some stress. And I'm going to give you seven. Sven, this is my present to you. It's going to be a nice little mix here, so here we go.

Number one, obviously the first one is you need to reframe the story of stress you are telling yourself, as we've already talked about in this

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episode. Okay, you want to create that as an active practice and work to changing your thoughts.

Number two, when you are stressed out, you need to start prioritizing things in importance. And no, emotional drama does not count. In fact, it's disqualified. the shit-stirrers, the instigators, we ain't got time for you. Move along. We have a to-do list and you're not on it, alright. That is your mentality. We do not have time for drama when we are already stressed out, bye.

Number three, create a structured to-do list that will make the most impact and get the most done. So in other words, double dip where you can. Get the most bang for your buck wherever you can. So if you can pick two kids up at the same place instead of having to travel across town and pick them up in two different places, like you just want to be strategic about double dipping so that you can get two things done at the same time, so you don't have to waste time in other areas if you don't have to.

Number four, you want to delegate when you can. So if there are tasks that you don't absolutely have to take on yourself, and that you can maybe delegate to your older children or your spouse or someone at work can take something on that's within their job description, you want to delegate where you can.

Number five, you want to take 20 minutes every day out for yourself. And I know you, brains who are stressed out are first going to say to me, "I don't have time for that." Yes, you do. You have to.

When you are super stressed out, it is critically important that your parasympathetic nervous system kicks on, okay. That is the part of you that resets. It's the part that relaxes. It's the part of you that calms down. And so when you actively take 20 minutes to actively do that, it is so helpful to your nervous system because if you just stay in your anatomic nervous system, which is like hyper-alert, getting things done, it's exhausting and it's stressful, okay. You will be more productive the more you can take some

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time to get your nervous system to chill out, even if it's just 20 minutes a day.

Number six, you want to let go of things you can't control. If you can't control it, you put forth your best effort and then you chuck it in the fuck-it-bucket and you move on. Worrying about things you can't control will only make anxiety and stress worse. Do not add that energy to your already stressed out plate, okay. You own your 50% and that's it.

And lastly, let people be people. Let them make their own choices. You are responsible for you and your own boundaries. Own them, work them, and let the rest go.

Alright, my friends, I hope this episode will help you navigate all of this stress and overwhelm, and if you never want to miss an episode, I would strongly encourage you to sign up and get on my email list. It's on my website. And if you give us your email, we'll let you know every time a new episode drops, because I get a lot of messages from people asking, like, "When is the new episode coming out? What's it about?" If you're on my email list, you will know all of the things. So I would encourage you to sign up at [nicolesymcox.com](http://nicolesymcox.com).

And as always, if strong emotions came up for you during this episode or if you felt triggered or overwhelmed, take it as information, okay, that something in your internal world needs support. There is no shame or blame in getting mental health support in your local state of residence. It's probably the best thing you can do for yourself. Alright, my friends, I will see you next week.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Mental Health Remix. If you like what you've heard and want to learn more, go to [nicolesymcox.com](http://nicolesymcox.com).

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