

Overwhelm: When the Treadmill Doesn't Stop

When capability is not the problem, but too many open loops are

By Kalpesh Raichura | Pressure | 3 min read

Overwhelm is not always a sign that we cannot cope. Often, it is what happens when responsibility expands faster than clarity.

The day keeps moving

There are seasons when life feels like a treadmill that will not stop. One meeting ends and another begins. A message arrives while we are answering the previous one. Work follows us home, and home follows us into work. Even rest can begin to feel like another task that must be completed efficiently.

For capable people, overwhelm is especially difficult to acknowledge. They are accustomed to being the ones others depend on. They can continue delivering long after their inner space has become crowded. Because the performance remains visible, the pressure stays invisible.

Overwhelm is therefore not proof of incapability. It is often the result of too many open loops competing for the same attention.

When everything becomes equally urgent

The mind does not only carry tasks. It carries unmade decisions, unanswered conversations, imagined consequences and standards that have never been questioned. A ten-minute action can occupy ten hours of mental space when we keep negotiating with it.

The problem deepens when every demand appears equally important. We keep moving, but lose the ability to distinguish motion from progress. We push harder, hoping speed will create relief. It rarely does. The treadmill simply becomes faster.

The cost beneath the calendar

Overwhelm changes more than productivity. It shortens patience. It makes ordinary questions feel intrusive. It reduces our ability to listen and turns small mistakes into evidence that everything is slipping. At home, the body may be present while the mind remains in the meeting room.

This is not a character flaw. It is a signal that attention needs a clearer home.

Step off without abandoning responsibility

Stepping off the treadmill does not mean giving up ambition or responsibility. It means creating enough distance to see what actually deserves movement.

Begin with three distinctions. What genuinely needs action today? What needs a conversation rather than more private thinking? What can be consciously postponed without carrying guilt every hour?

Then choose one next right thing. Not the entire rescue plan. Not the perfect week. One meaningful movement that reduces an open loop.

The nervous system experiences clarity as relief. The workload may not change immediately, but your relationship with it can.

A seven-day experiment

For seven days, begin the morning by naming one outcome that matters most. Take one two-minute pause before reacting under pressure. Complete one unresolved small action. Protect one device-free meal. At the end of the day, acknowledge what moved instead of measuring only what remains.

The purpose is not to become perfectly organised. It is to recover the ability to choose.

Ease is not the absence of a demanding life. Sometimes it begins when the treadmill is still moving, but you stop letting it decide your pace.

A question to carry forward

What is one open loop that would create disproportionate relief if you closed it today?

With respect and possibility,



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