What is Your Perception of Overwhelm?

*“Overwhelm is not always having too much to do.*

*It’s not knowing what to do next.”*

I am finding that so often what we think about a situation really boils down to perception. For example, on rainy days some say it makes them feel sluggish, moody, irritable, unmotivated, etc. Others may say it makes them feel energetic, eager to clean out closets and drawers, cozy, filled with thoughts and reflections, and more.

I believe that when it comes to a sense of overwhelm it falls into that perception category. Feeling overwhelmed can cause some of us to freeze up with frustration, indecisiveness, and an inability to take action. For others, it may be taken as a blessing in disguise and we may be ready

to take that first step. For example, it may mean we are overloaded with tasks because we have been blessed with much desired activity in our business and that is an answer to our prayers. Others may desire to free themselves of clutter. The feeling of overwhelm may be the spark that lights the fire under them to proceed.

Overwhelm may be a blessing in disguise when it points out to us the need to slow down, and take inventory of our lives. It may be a sign that perhaps we should take better care of ourselves both mentally and physically. It can also lead to very positive actions such as learning how to prioritize and set up systems at work and at home, hiring some help if our finances allow for that or calling on a good friend to assist, learning to prioritize and make schedules that include enough down time and rest, etc.

Overwhelm and delegating are actually biblical. In the Book of Numbers

it tells us that as the Israelites were wandering through the desert towards the Promised Land they were complaining about their hardships. In

Num. 11:10-15 we read about Moses’ breakdown when he told God,

“I can’t carry all these people by myself! The load is far too heavy! I’d rather you killed me than treat me like this. Please spare me this misery!”

God proceeded to advise Moses to bring forth seventy of the leaders of Israel to help him. God told Moses in Num. 11:17, “They will bear the burden of the people along with you, so you will not have to carry it alone.”

Many find themselves in a toxic environment that lends itself to feelings

of overwhelm. Such an environment could include friends and/or family members. Holidays are a good example. How many family members find themselves feeling overwhelmed when they have to get together during certain times of the year? Often the conversations that take place end up being disrespectful, demanding, and irrational. Words matter and they can be hurtful and long lasting. Responses to words of condemnation by family members can bring out the worst in us and cause us to be reactive.

Another environment that has the potential to become toxic and produce overwhelm is social media. Participants can develop the feeling that they are being torn in many directions. The instantaneous nature of social media that can flood our devices and our minds can cause us to feel uncaring and irresponsible if we do not respond in a timely manner. What we see as we scroll, much of which is not even true, can incite an array of feelings such anger, frustration, fear, annoyance, and anxiety. Social media can also peak our curiosity, causing us to end up heading down

a rabbit hole that produces nothing but overwhelm.

Since feelings of overwhelm are quite prevalent and often caused by the actions of others, the question then becomes what can we do about them. It is very important to realize that we can only control our own thoughts and actions. We can never control anyone else’s. It is also important to realize that, generally speaking, as human beings we do things in life that benefit us in some way. Some of the things we do may even be detrimental to our health, but still there is some benefit to us or we would not choose to do them.

When it comes to feeling overwhelmed, there are some who feel energized by that sensation. They have been in that state for so long they don’t know any other way to feel. If our overwhelm involves other people whom we are allowing to put us in that state, it may be that we do not realize the harm it can do to us physically and mentally and we believe we enjoy a good battle from time to time. There is a saying that goes “Would you rather be right or would you rather be happy?” There are those who would rather fight to be right even to their own detriment. They want to prove a point.

If you find yourself in a state of overwhelm, it may behoove you to do some soul searching and determine to what degree it bothers you. It is then up to you to decide if are you willing to make a commitment to take the necessary steps to do something about it. It can be helpful to write down your thoughts. It is important to determine some steps you can take to mitigate the situation. Many find they feel better as soon as they begin to write down a plan of action!!!

If your overwhelm is task related a good beginning step is to prioritize your tasks. Write them down and simply use an A, B, C to label the importance of the task. You could also use the letters to determine which tasks take priority as far as removing the pressure of overwhelm. Then the key is to make the commitment to follow the steps. As you begin to make progress, it will energize you to keep going. There are also a plethora of websites dedicated to various systems to speed up the process of getting tasks accomplished.

Many find it quite helpful to break tasks down into bite size pieces. That will make the process more manageable and help you get a sense of progress sooner. Baby steps going in the right direction combined with

a little patience will allow you to complete your mission. Some find it helpful to have a motivated accountability partner who is working on accomplishing some goals.

The concept of a toxic environment may, in fact, lead us to the sometimes uncomfortable yet much needed task of establishing boundaries. When we allow others to take advantage of us to the point of overwhelm, there is the potential to raise our stress levels and perhaps make us sick. In some cases, not putting boundaries in place may set us up for feelings of anger, frustration, depression, and more.

Please note: For more on establishing boundaries please see my article called “Personal Boundaries.”

If you believe in prayer and have an active, ongoing relationship with the Lord, seek first His Kingdom. He will give you additional thoughts, ideas, and inspiration to move forward as only He can do!!

If you would like to learn more about how God can lead you throughout your day and avoid overwhelm in the first place, please check out my free course on this website. As I say in my course, as we learn to discern his voice and allow ourselves to be led by Him, we then stay in alignment with His will and can often avoid overwhelm in the first place. Life becomes so much easier and joyful!! Of course, there will be trials and tribulations, and some overwhelm as well, but having a strong foundation in the faith will give us more strength than we could ask or imagine to get through it all.

Once you notice that your sense of overwhelm is subsiding, it is then helpful to check in with yourself to see how you are feeling. Of course, if you actively involved God in the process take the time to thank Him. Take note and write down what was helpful in getting you to that point. Once again, keeping a record of these types of accomplishments is so helpful because if those sensations of overwhelm reappear, you will know how to manage them before they have time to fester.