

3 STEPS TO SOOTHE YOUR OVERWHELM FOR HAPPIER DAYS:

A GUIDE FOR WOMEN SEEKING EASE DURING
HEALTH CHALLENGES



By Happy By Design



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How to soothe your overwhelm for happier days:

A Guide For Women Seeking Ease During Health Challenges

Feeling overwhelmed isn't fun, and it's even less fun when you are trying to figure out how to manage health challenges, either physical, mental, or emotional.

Learning to manage your overwhelm is a crucial step when you are trying to thrive and live your best life while dealing with health issues. Untreated overwhelm can really affect the levels of happiness and contentment and magnify the symptoms that you are experiencing, making you believe that your health issues are worse than they really are.

As I go through cancer, I have made it my mission to figure out how to keep my overwhelm at bay so I can have the best mental and physical focus to lead my life the way I want to live it.

As part of my process, I created the REFRAME framework to identify and pinpoint what I need to soothe my feelings of being overwhelmed.

When you feel overwhelmed, you feel like you're drowning. It's like you're stuck in a thick fog where you can't see a way out. So, when you feel overwhelmed, having an "escape" plan is essential. Something that will help alleviate the intensity of your overwhelm.

Here's where the REFRAME framework comes into play. The REFRAME framework would help you create your "escape" plan. Follow the steps below to create your personal escape plan.

Note: The information in this guide isn't medical advice. Everything here is based on my experience and my opinions.

Step 1

Identify How And Where You Feel Your Overwhelming Feelings

There are many ways overwhelm can present itself in our lives. I have been able to identify 6 main areas where overwhelm tends to show its dirty little face. You can find overwhelm in multiple of these areas or even in all of them. Identify where and how feelings of overwhelm are showing up in your life.

01 In your body



- You start off your day okay, but by lunchtime, you're just zapped of energy and ready to crash.
- You are either skipping meals or munching mindlessly.
- Your neck and shoulders are constantly stiff and sore, like you're carrying the weight of the world.
- You find yourself biting your nails or fidgeting a lot, especially when things get too much.
- You have no desire to move your body, not even for a walk, but know I should.

02 In your mood and reactions



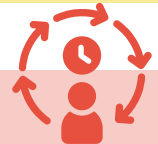
- You're snapping and getting angry at everyone for the smallest things.
- You find yourself tearing up or crying over stuff that normally wouldn't get to you or crying more than normal.
- There are days when you just feel kinda... nothing, like you're just going through the motions.
- There are days you feel no motivation at all and wonder what's the point.

03 In your mind



- You walk into rooms and forget why you are there.
- The smallest decisions, like what to eat, suddenly feel like choosing the fate of the universe.
- Find yourself zoning out a lot, lost in thought, even when you should be focusing.
- Can't stop scrolling through bad news or social media.
- Your brain keeps replaying the same worries or mistakes.
- Your brain won't stop worrying about every little thing in your life and health.
- You feel guilty and overthinking things about your life and health.

04 In your daily life



- You're constantly misplacing things like your keys or phone, especially when rushing around.
- Even the stuff you normally enjoy feels like a mountain to climb, so Netflix or Instagram wins again.
- That laundry pile is starting to look like a mountain, but you just can't find the energy to tackle it, or any other chores.
- Find yourself binge-watching shows or scrolling late into the night, messing up your sleep.
- You have a big to-do list, but no desire to do them so you feel guilty because you feel like you are being lazy.
- You have a big to-do list, and you burn yourself out trying to constantly tackle it.

Step 2

Get to know REFRAME

REFRAME is a framework that I use to take action when I notice that I am feeling overwhelmed. This framework helps me make changes depending on what area the overwhelm is showing up in my life. Before understanding how to apply REFRAME, get familiar with the framework.

R: Rest

Think of rest like recharging your batteries. When you're dealing with health issues, it's like your battery drains faster. So, resting isn't just nice; it's a must-have. And hey, resting isn't just about sleeping (though good sleep is super important). It's giving yourself permission to slow down and take it easy. It's like hitting the pause button in the middle of a chaotic game.

E: Express your emotions

Facing health challenges can be a rollercoaster, right? One minute, you're up; the next, you're down. Letting those feelings out is super important. You're going through a lot, and it's okay to feel all sorts of ways about it. Expressing yourself helps you process these feelings and makes that emotional load a little lighter, making the journey more manageable.

F: Food:

When juggling health challenges, food becomes more than just fuel; it's a source of pleasure and a way to nurture your body and mind. It's about finding that sweet spot between eating what you love and eating what your body needs to stay strong. Good food is a joy that lifts you up and a support that helps your body and mind not feel so burdened. It's balancing tasty with healthy, turning each meal into a part of your healing, and keeping you focused on what matters without adding stress. PS This includes water, too.



R: Readjust routine:

When dealing with health stuff, your old routine might not cut it anymore. It's like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. So, give yourself the green light to switch things up. Maybe it's scheduling more rest or pacing your work differently based on how much your energy levels fluctuate. It's all about creating a new normal that respects what your body and mind need right now. Think of it as customizing your day-to-day life so it fits you perfectly, health challenges and all.

A: Abandon your expectations

This one's a biggie. When facing health issues, you might feel like you still have to keep up with everything like before, but that's like running a race with your shoelaces tied together. It's okay to ease up on yourself. Maybe some days you can do a lot, and some days just getting out of bed is a win. That's totally fine. It's about being kind to yourself and realizing that your best will look different now – and that's not just okay; it's absolutely normal. Letting go of those old expectations helps you focus on what's truly important: your health and well-being.

M: Move your body

This one might sound tough, especially when you're not feeling your best. But moving your body is like a gentle nudge to your system, saying, 'Hey, we're still in this together.' Think about moving your body as putting gas in your tank. Moving your body will energize you physically, emotionally, and mentally. It will keep all the energy trapped in your body and mind freely flowing. Plus, it's a great way to remind yourself of what your body can do, even in challenging times.

E: Explore your relationships

Navigating health challenges isn't just a personal journey; it affects your relationships, too. It's like suddenly adding a new dynamic to your interactions with others. This is why keeping an eye on the health of your relationships is key. It's about understanding how your health situation influences how you connect and interact with those around you. Sometimes, health challenges can bring people closer but can also create misunderstandings or strain. That's why evaluating your interactions, thoughts, and feelings about your relationships with others is important. Now more than ever, your relationships will need constant TLC.

Step 3

Match REFRAME with where your overwhelm is showing up

Now that you have identified where your feelings of overwhelm are showing up, and understand REFRAME, it's time to play a matching game.

- 1 Now that you know where the feelings of overwhelm are showing up, describe in detail how it's showing up.

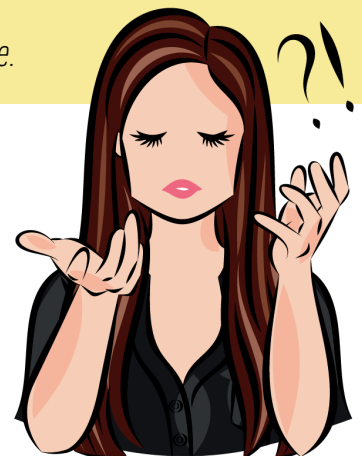
Example 1: In my emotions and reactions: Lately I have been getting very upset with the kids and my husband. I keep yelling at them for not picking up their things or leaving messes around the house. I also get upset by loud noises even if they are just playing music or having fun. I feel like I have no control over my anger and I have never been like this before.

Example 2: In my daily life: I feel like my head is going to explode just thinking about everything I need to do. I don't feel well but things need to get done but by 3 pm my energy is too low and I can't do the thing I want to do.

- 2 Now that you have a deeper understanding of your overwhelming feeling, ask yourself, "why do I think it is showing up in this area?"

Example 1: I feel like my family expects me to do everything around the house even though I don't feel well. I need their help, but feel guilty for asking them to do more than they are used to. These are my responsibilities, but I sincerely can't do them anymore by myself, and I am resentful that they aren't noticing how unwell I am.

Example 2: I am putting too much pressure on myself on getting things done.



3 Now that you have an even deeper understanding of what is happening, go back to REFRAME, read each element, and choose which one you want to apply and how you will apply it.

Example 1: Express my emotions: I'm going to have a meeting with my family this weekend and tell them how I am feeling and how I need help. I will be calm and together we can come up with a plan of new chores.

Example 2: Abandon expectations: I know I want to be the energized woman I used to be but I am not. I'm burning myself out trying to be that woman. I'm going to create a list of the things I do everyday, and eliminate things from that list that I can no longer do. I will remind myself that it is ok to have new expectations of myself and I can choose to live a more balanced life considering my health.

4 Optional but recommended. Select 1-2 supportive REFRAME elements.

Example 1: Explore my relationships: My family and I need to spend some quality time together. For the next month, I'll set time apart every Friday to have a movie night in our living room. We will make popcorn and let the kids choose a movie they want to watch.

Example 2: Readjust routine: Now that I know what things I really want to focus on, I am going to create a new schedule that will match my energy levels with my focus things.

This process will help you create an escape plan that will soothe your feelings of overwhelm. You can try many combinations of REFRAME until you find that sweet spot. Check out the list below for suggested activities to apply REFRAME.

Suggested activities for REFRAME

REST:



- Practice box breathing (Inhale, hold 4 secs, exhale, hold 4 secs, repeat for 3-5 mins).
- Take 30 min naps, and make it part of your daily schedule.
- Take long, warm bath or shower.
- Read a book for fun.
- Do a relaxing hobby like knitting, puzzles, painting, coloring, yoga, etc.
- Spend time alone in silence for at least 5 mins per day (I like doing this when I'm driving).

EXPRESS YOUR EMOTIONS:



- Use a prompted journal like Happy By Design Journal: I created this journal specifically for women going through health challenges who want to learn how to make room for happiness.
- Talk to a trusted friend or family member.
- Go to therapy.
- Join a support group for people with similar health challenges.
- Use expressive therapies like music, dancy, or art.

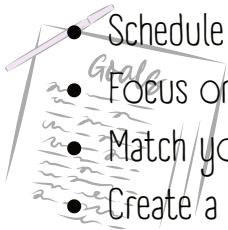
FOOD



- Have your favorite drink like diet coke.
- Make food that takes 30 mins to make and are less than 5 ingredients.
- Find a food influencer to follow.
- Have at least once a week your favorite food or dessert.
- Go out and eat at least once every two weeks.

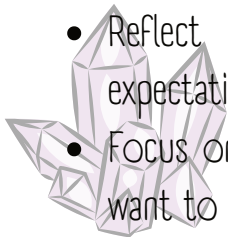
Suggested activities for REFRAME

READJUST YOUR ROUTINE



- Schedule regular breaks throughout your day.
- Focus on max 3 to-do tasks per day.
- Match your energy levels with the difficulty of tasks.
- Create a morning and evening routine that re-energizes you.
- Eliminate any tasks that are too much for you in this season of life and delegate them.
- Use reminders or alarms to manage your time.

ABANDON EXPECTATIONS



- Reflect on what is realistically achievable when it comes to tasks, goals, and expectations of yourself, your body and mind, and your family.
- Focus on what you can do now rather than what you could do before or what you want to do in the future.
- Take it one day at a time.
- Avoid comparing yourself to others, your past self, or who you hoped to be in the future before your health challenges. You are wonderful and you can still achieve wonderful things.
- Set goals and dreams while honoring your health and limitations. Remember limitations only mean finding a new way.
- Create affirmations you can read whenever you feel you aren't measuring up.

MOVE YOUR BODY

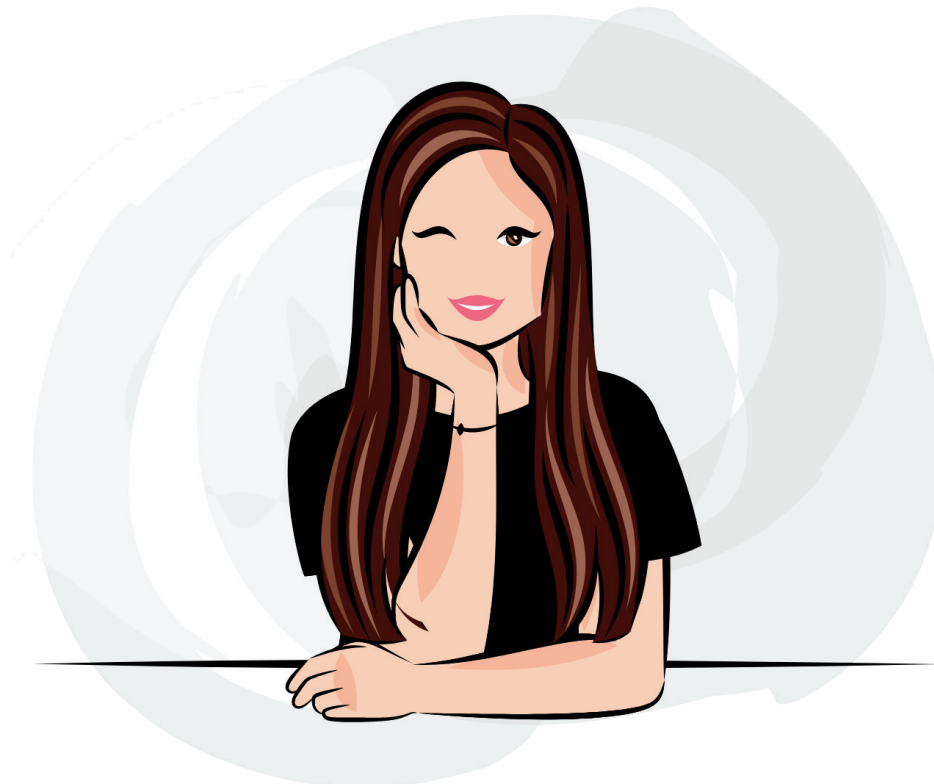


- Go outside for walks every day.
- Walk around your house for a few minutes if you have been seating for almost 2 hrs.
- Consult with a personal trainer who can create an exercise plan that honors your body but also pushes you out of your comfort zone without burning you out.
- Find a workout buddy.
- Dance in your living room with your family.

Suggested activities for REFRAME

EXPLORE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

- Have a family council with your family every month to discuss what's not working and create a plan together.
- Take time every night with your spouse to talk about each other's day.
- Plan activities once a week with your family and once a month with friends.
- Make sure you are having sex. I know! I blushed while writing this, LOL, but it's so important that you are physically connected with your partner.
- Don't forget to also be there for your loved ones as they go through their own hard times.



My Escape Plan

1 Where do I feel overwhelming feelings in my life?

- In my body
- In my mind
- In my mood and reactions
- In daily life

2 Describe in detail how the feelings of overwhelm are showing in your life?

3 Why do you think you are feeling overwhelming feelings in this area of your life?

My Escape Plan

4 Which REFRAME element I will apply.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> REST | <input type="checkbox"/> ABANDON EXPECTATIONS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXPRESS MY EMOTIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVE YOUR BODY |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORE MY RELATIONSHIPS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> READJUST MY ROUTINE | |

How I'm going to apply it:

5 OPTIONAL: Supportive REFRAME element I will apply:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> REST | <input type="checkbox"/> ABANDON EXPECTATIONS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXPRESS MY EMOTIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVE YOUR BODY |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORE MY RELATIONSHIPS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> READJUST MY ROUTINE | |

How I'm going to apply it:
