WAYS TO COPE WHEN YOU ARE OVERWHELMED AT WORK

1. Avoid getting into a victim stance.

Once you start being a victim you adopt a role of helplessness [in which you feel] you can do nothing to get yourself out. Remember, there is no knight in shining armor to rescue you. It is your situation, and you, more than anyone else, have responsibility for changing it.

2. Stay in the moment.

Do not get caught in the trap of thinking about all the other things that will need doing when you finish what you are doing at that moment. We finish each task much more quickly and easily if we focus solely on it, instead of at the same time worrying about what else we need to do, about the situation in general, and about whose fault it all is.

3. Take time to list all the tasks on which you spend time and decide which ones are not essential.

Your first impulse will be that every one of them is absolutely essential. Move past that to decide which tasks are not. There will probably be some that you decided to do because that was the ideal way to do it. Remember that every task serves an end result. In most work situations it is the result that must be achieved, not the process. The process can often be shortened without damage to the result.

4. Let go of control issues.

How much of the pressure you are feeling really comes from the outside, and how much is actually from you?

5. Delegate.

Decide if there is anything that can be delegated, or that more fairly belongs to someone else's work load. Do not just dump it on them, but discuss with those involved how work may be redistributed more fairly.

6. Come up with your own suggested solutions to the work-time crunch and take them to your boss.

[He or she] will probably be delighted that you are producing, rather than asking for, ways to solve the problem.

7. Keep in mind that work loads are often cyclical.
The fact that you are rushed off your feet this week does not mean the situation is permanent. What can you legitimately put aside to catch up on when things slow down a bit? (This is NOT the same thing as procrastinating.)

8. Take your breaks.

Five minutes away from the work situation will do far more to clear your head and your attitude than the work you would achieve in that five minutes if you did not leave your desk. Lunch-breaks exist not just so we can eat, but so we may take a mental break. Put something in your office or work situation to remind you of pleasant things and take you out of your frantic mindset. Read or listen to something that will inspire you or bring you peace.

9. When you leave work, leave your work behind.

Do not let your work problems rent space in your head during the time when you are not supposed to be working....

10. If you cannot find any way to change your situation, and continue to feel trapped, remind yourself that you chose this job. Remind yourself why.

Has it now become something different from what it was when you were hired? Do you still choose it? If not, start updating your resume. If you choose to stay, remember that you are there by choice, which must mean that in some way the positives still outweigh the negatives. Try to focus on the positives.

(Reference: Diana Robinson, Adapted from "The Top 10 Ways to Cope When You Are Overwhelmed at Work," Copyright 2003 by Thomas Leonard, [http://www.coachville.com](http://www.coachville.com), Permission granted to distribute.)