

Overcoming Overwhelm

Elaine Hilides

Text copyright © 2016 Elaine Hilides

All Rights Reserved

This book accompanies the Udemy course: Overcoming Overwhelm

<https://www.udemy.com/overcoming-overwhelm/>

Overwhelm - it's something that affects everyone isn't it? Everyone talks about feeling overwhelmed whether it's at work, juggling work and family commitments, or in a relationship.

I used to feel overwhelmed so frequently that I thought that this feeling was normal, that it was something that everyone felt and that it was a by product of life. During my coaching training, I learnt strategies and techniques that were designed to help me manage these feelings but, to be honest, trying to remember and implement these techniques just added another layer of overwhelm.

Then, in 2009, I was introduced to a way of looking at life that was so simple it was almost insulting, after all, I had spent years and vast amounts of money studying how to manage overwhelm and stress. The three simple principles of Mind, Consciousness and Thought I was introduced to explain why there isn't any need for tools and techniques, for analysing our feelings and emotions. All we have to do is to understand that we are always, 100%, feeling our thinking and I'm going to be repeating this same message throughout this book. That you are always feeling your thinking and that you are not affected by your circumstances but by your thinking about your circumstances.

A simple message, yes? This is something we all know isn't it. Yes, it is. It's certainly a knowledge that we were born with but most of the time we know this intellectually but not at a feeling level. We know it, but we still get tricked by our thinking in to believing that our feelings are coming from the outside world. And it's really difficult to control the outside world isn't it.

We have expectations of how we are supposed to live, how people are supposed to treat us and how we are supposed to treat them. We respond to our circumstances and end up rushing around trying to do everything at once and keeping those plates spinning is exhausting.

Or we get overwhelmed worrying about things that happened in the past, or that we think might happen in the future. We wear ourselves out running the same thoughts through our minds until it feels as if our head might explode.

In this book, we'll look at three main areas where we feel overwhelmed; areas that take up most of everyone's lives, in a relationship with a partner where it's easy to get overwhelmed with feelings of resentment and anger rather than having a loving feeling, as parents where it's easy to get overwhelmed with our child's behaviour and moods and in the workplace where you might get overwhelmed with the pressure of work and by your colleagues.

But how about if I showed you how to let go of these feelings? How to notice the feeling and recognise where your thoughts are taking you? And how to do this easily and effortlessly?

This book will help you to:

- fall back in to your own innate, inner resilience
- to recognise when you're heading in to overwhelm
- to identify your habitual thought patterns and change them
- to understand at a deep level where your feelings come from
- to feel free and at peace no matter what is going on around you

Thank you for buying this book and I hope you enjoy it.

www.elainehilides.com

Contents

What is Overwhelm?

- Where does Overwhelm come from?
- Is your thinking real?
- Anyone would be Overwhelmed in my circumstances
- I'm always Overwhelmed!
- We're always feeling our thinking

Overwhelmed in your Relationship?

- How to get on with your partner - forever!
- Why we get Overwhelmed and Upset?
- But I can't get over this!
- Am I in the right Relationship?

Overwhelmed by your Children?

- How not to get Overwhelmed by the Terrible Twos!
- Teenagers

Overwhelmed at Work?

- Overwhelmed by Work Colleagues?
- Overwhelmed by expectations at Work?

So how *do* you Overcome Overwhelm?

What is Overwhelm?

We all feel it and yet we can't feel it with our fingers. So what is overwhelm?

Well, the dictionary describes overwhelms as:

verb (used with object)

1. to overcome completely in mind or feeling:
2. to overpower or overcome, especially with superior forces; destroy; crush:
3. to cover or bury beneath a mass of something:
4. to load, heap, treat, or address with an overpowering or excessive amount of anything:

We've all been in that place, haven't we? When we have so much to do that we don't know where to start, we feel as if we buried beneath something, we feel worn out before we even begin whatever it is that we need to do. Or we can't stop thinking about something that has happened, or been said, and we're overwhelmed with feelings of sorrow, anxiety or anger.

When you feel overwhelmed, you feel pressure and pressure is really hard to deal with. When you feel under pressure, you get overwhelmed by everything you have to do, it feels as if everything is weighing you down.

The key to overcoming overwhelm is to go back to the beginning to see where overwhelm comes from but this doesn't mean you need to delve in to your past, nor does it mean that you need to examine your life to see why you're getting overwhelmed. In fact, you may be surprised when you see where overwhelm comes from.

In this book, we'll look at areas where it's common to feel overwhelmed, whether it's at work or in relationships. When we feel overwhelmed we are a less effective version of ourselves and we don't function as we would like to. But I still haven't said where overwhelm comes from, have I?

Where does Overwhelm come from?

Constantly battling with feelings of stress, anxiety and overwhelm is debilitating. Stress and anxiety affect your health, happiness and quality of life. But what if everything that you knew about stress and overwhelm was wrong? What if, rather than managing the feeling of overwhelm and stress, you could understand where it came from and then find a way to let the feeling go?

And this is going to be easier than you think.

I'm going to be talking to you about a new way of understanding the human condition. A new way to understand these feelings, an understanding that challenges whether stress and overwhelm is even real?

This new understanding will show you what lies behind the human experience and will allow you to live free from these debilitating symptoms. But be warned, this understanding will appear to be both controversial and way too simple.

We are all thinking beings. It's a fact that we are always feeling our thinking. On one level we know this, it makes sense but on another, fundamental level this fact passes us by. We know that we are thinking but we don't always make the link between thought and feeling. We imagine that we are feeling our circumstances rather than experiencing our thinking about our circumstances.

Our experience is created by three basic principles; Mind, Thought and Consciousness.

Mind is universal energy and you can call it whatever you want, spirit, God, whatever it means to you. This power source is what makes the grass and the trees grow. When I water my garden, I think that I'm growing the plants but, honestly, they know just how to grow without me thanks to this universal energy.

Thought is how we create our reality and Consciousness is what brings thought to life. Let's think of a DVD player (and yes, I know that these will be consigned to history soon but we all know what they look like).

Mind is like the energy source you plug the DVD player in to, you can't use the DVD player without energy and thought is the film you put in the player. You'll experience whatever film you're watching so if you're watching a weepy rom-com, that's what you'll feel whereas if you're watching a scary film, that's what you'll feel, and Consciousness is like the DVD player, you need Consciousness to bring Thought to life just like you need the DVD player to bring the film to life.

So what do these principles have to do with you feeling overwhelmed? The things that are overwhelming you are real, aren't they? They aren't just your thinking.

Is your thinking real?

Well, that's the amazing special effect power of consciousness, it makes everything we think real to us. Have you ever had an argument with someone in your head. You know how it goes, you do your bit and then you do their bit? You wind yourself up with this argument whilst your mood goes down until you feel upset and angry - but the conversation wasn't 'real' was it? You made it up.

If you think that you aren't always feeling your thinking, try having miserable thoughts and a happy feeling - it ain't going to happen!

Just like every other feeling, it looks as if overwhelm is coming from our circumstances but I'm here to tell you that overwhelm is always coming from our thinking about our circumstances. You might wake up and feel overwhelmed at 5 o'clock in the morning about something that is going to happen the next day or even the next week. But it isn't happening now, is it? The feeling isn't coming from the circumstance but the thinking about the circumstance.

Overwhelm comes from a state of mind, it's a feeling of pressure that looks as if it is coming from outside us, from our circumstances. But we can't feel our circumstances, can we? Think about it, it's impossible. How can you feel the traffic jam, the argument, the to do list? What's happening is that you're feeling your thinking about the circumstances and this book will help you to get a deep understanding of your own state of mind, your own habitual thinking and this will help you to overcome overwhelm.

Yes, you might have had an argument with your partner or your child, your boss might be giving you more work than you can handle but, really, are any of these things overwhelming you? Every thought you have is like a google search, instantly you have a million hits so when you think about your argument, without realising, you think about every other argument that you've ever had with your partner and all the old grievances and aggravations are stirred up until you have a head full of angry, upset thoughts - and that feels overwhelming. Think of a snow globe, hundreds of thousands of thoughts swirling around when you're shook up and no room for clarity. But what happens when you let the snow globe settle? Then there is clear space, room for new, fresh thought.

When you feel overwhelmed and you don't recognise where the feeling is coming from, it's understandable that you attach the feeling to a circumstance. It makes sense in the moment but when you make the link between thought and feeling, suddenly it doesn't make any sense at all.

Anyone would be Overwhelmed in my circumstances

It's easy to think that there's a link between our circumstances or problems and the way we feel but I hope that you can now see that there is no direct link between the two. How can there be a link between something that is happening on the outside and something that is happening on the inside? If I saw an injured bird and felt sad, how would my feeling be coming from the bird? There isn't a chemical link coming from the bird that affects my hormones. All of my feeling, 100%, is coming from my thoughts about the bird, or any situation, and can only last as long as the thought lasts.

Another example is how we all react differently to circumstances? Have you ever watched a film with a partner or family member and one of you hates the film and the other one loves it? How can that be? You've both just watched the same film.

This example demonstrates how your experience can never come from the film. It can only come from the way you think about the film or everyone would have the same experience.

Everybody thinks all of the time. Dr Frederic Luskin of Stanford University says we have 60,000 thoughts a day, the Laboratory of Neuro Imaging claims it is 70,000 and other experts go as high as 100,000 thoughts a day. Whatever the number, that is a lot of thinking!

We don't get overwhelmed by the volume of thoughts because we are designed for thought to flow through us, we get overwhelmed by the content of the thoughts that we notice and repeat.

The problem is that often we have the same stale, old thoughts every day. So if we have 70,000 thoughts in one day and 90% of those thoughts are the same ones that we had the day before, we're going to have the same feelings that we had the day before. Neuro science says that your brain is organised to reflect everything you know in your life, your brain is a record of your environment, so if you're doing the same things every day, and having the same thoughts, you're activating the same response mechanism, you're hardwiring your brain in to specific patterns that reflect your external world. But you don't have to change your external world to overcome overwhelm, just the way you're thinking about it.

Imagine going for a walk along by a river, or on the beach and feeling really relaxed and happy. You're looking at the sunlight on the water and all is well with the world. Then you get a phone call to say that your car, which is in the garage for an MOT, needs a lot of work doing to it and you're facing a big bill. Suddenly you don't see the sunlight on the water, your legs are aching from walking and you can feel the breeze from the water feels chilling. Then the garage call back again, apologising because your car has passed it's MOT and doesn't need any repairs and they called the wrong person. Miraculously, the breeze drops and you can feel the sun on your shoulders. But nothing in the external world changed. Just your thinking.

When you think about all of the things that you have to do, are you thinking about the thing that you need to do in this moment or are you thinking about what you have to do immediately after that task, and then the next thing, and the next thing until you have a number of things to do hanging over your head like a big black cloud - and you wonder why you feel overwhelmed?

This happens in so many areas of life. If someone has 4 stone of weight to lose, all they can see is the 4 stone. They aren't interested in losing a pound a week because the end goal seems so enormous and so far away. They get totally overwhelmed by the enormity of the amount of weight that they have to lose and feel as if it's impossible and so they think, "what's the point? I'm never going to lose that much so why try?" and they give up before they start.

But, just like driving along a dark country lane, all you need to see is the few feet ahead of you that is showing up in your head lights. And then another few feet. And another until you reach your destination. You don't have to look at the destination and decide it's too far away. Nor do you have to look at the 4 stone, or the mountain of paperwork. If you're decorating a room, you start with one wall first don't you?

When you believe that the feeling is coming from the circumstances, you try and fix the outside world and don't address your state of mind. That's when people feel overwhelmed and victimised by the outside world. It's very hard to think straight and behave reasonably when you're overwhelmed and under pressure.

It's like putting buckets under a leaky roof to catch the rain and running from bucket to bucket rather than fixing the roof. Let's sort out your state of mind and you won't have a bucketful of thinking about your circumstances.

It's hard to pinpoint exactly when the feeling of overwhelm starts, isn't it? You can't say, "Well, I was fine and then I suddenly felt overwhelmed" although sometimes that last email or cross word can feel like the straw that broke the camels back. But your feeling didn't start with that email, it started before then and built up.

The feeling begins when you start to think about whatever it is you're feeling overwhelmed about. It's like a mood. You can't say, "I got in to a mood at 10.45am and then got out of it again and 3.15pm". Just like you can't say the exact second you wake up, even if you use an alarm, or the second you fall asleep. You know that you must have been asleep because now you're awake but it's impossible to define the exact moment. You were asleep and now you're awake. And it's the same with feelings of pressure and overwhelm, when your thinking about whatever it is that appears to be overwhelming you changes, your feeling changes.

I'm not dismissing the challenges that people are facing, I know that bereavement, debt, divorce, work and relationship pressures can feel overwhelming and I'm not trying to play down your circumstances, I'm helping you to see that you aren't feeling your cir-

cumstances. I know that seeing things differently doesn't change your circumstances but it can help you to feel differently about them.

When you stop taking your thinking seriously, you return to a state of clarity and can deal with the circumstances in a better way rather than feel overwhelmed and defeated.

I'm not saying that you'll never get overwhelmed again, I'm going to show you how to acknowledge that you're having these feelings but not pay too much attention to the thinking that creates the feeling, you can see that it doesn't matter that you're having this feeling. You're feeling overwhelmed and under pressure - so what? When you start to look at these feelings in this way, you'll be amazed at how quickly they pass. Because the problem with feeling pressure and overwhelm is that, without realising, you focus on the feeling so not only do you have a lot to do or cope with, you're also trying to deal with it in a tense state of mind which makes it harder for you to think straight, plus you're preoccupied with being in that state of mind. It's a wonder you can function at all!

But most of the time we don't notice the thoughts we're having, so how can we change them?

The first thing to do is recognise that the outside world of work deadlines, relationship issues or money worries aren't running you - you are running your thinking about these things. Just noticing that you have a head full of thinking starts a shift.

I'm always Overwhelmed

When you're trying to control your thinking, you're not seeing that your thinking is out of control. Ironically, the more we have on our minds, the less we actually get done. It is like paralysis, we think that we should be doing so much that we don't know where to start and our thinking shoots off in different directions. The more frantic our thinking, the more frantic we feel.

It's like trying to open too many windows on your computer and getting the spinning ball of doom. The computer gets overloaded and might shut down, or it will definitely slow down. But there isn't anything wrong with the computer, when it resets it starts to work properly. It stops being overloaded.

Recognising that you're feeling your thinking helps you to reset the machine. Helps you to return to Clarity.

You can't function properly when you're overloaded. When we live responding and reacting to our environment, we are knocking the body out of balance and then that imbalance becomes the new balance and overwhelm becomes 'normal'. But it isn't something we have to experience.

If you keep running the same chemicals through your body, you're innocently keeping yourself in the same state, you keep having the same thoughts and the same feelings and you believe that this is, 'how you are'.

Neuroplasticity says that we are changed by every thought we think. Amazing eh? We'll talk more about this later.

But for now, let's recap. When do you get overwhelmed? What are you doing at the moment you feel overwhelm? Even today, I started to get those feelings. I started thinking, I have too much to do, how will I get blah blah finished, is this new project going to work and on and on. I started to feel anxiety and panic build up until I stopped and laughed at myself. I had to ask myself, "what am I doing right now? Right this minute?" and at that minute, I was drying my hair. Was I overwhelmed by drying my hair? No, of course not. I was overwhelmed by my thoughts of the things I felt that I had to get done during the day. And, not only things that I had to get done that day, I was time traveling into the future and imagining the consequences of not getting things done tomorrow and how tired I would be trying to get all of the things on my list done.

Speaking of feeling tired. I was once at an evening seminar listening to one of my mentors, someone that I was thrilled to be listening to as she only came to England a couple of times a year. The venue for the event is known for its bad timekeeping and the event was supposed to start at 7.30 and finish at 9.30 but it didn't start until nearly 8 and then the break went on far longer than it was meant to as people were catching up with each other and engaging the speaker in conversation. When it got to about 9.15 I started to think, "this isn't going to finish until nearly 10 and by the time I've said good-

bye to everyone, it could be nearly 10.30 and it's going to take me an hour to get home and I'll be tired and probably won't be able to sleep. I've got an early morning client tomorrow and I'll be tired when I'm working with him and that isn't fair to him, I should be on the ball." I started to feel really edgy and anxious and wasn't listening to the speaker at all as I was consumed by my thinking about how tired I was going to be in the morning. Luckily, I caught myself and laughed at the irony, here I was listening to a speaker talking about the illusion of thought and there I was getting totally caught up in my thoughts. Once I saw this, my anxiety and tiredness vanished in a second.

We are often caught in a vision of the future (my imagining that I wasn't going to sleep and I would be tired in the morning) whilst we're living in the memory of the past (I was thinking about nights that I hadn't slept well) but all I had to do was to come back to that very second. And in that very second, before I got caught up in my thinking, I was happily listening to the speaker.

Years ago, people thought that mind and body were separate but the field of Quantum Physics has proven that mind and body are related. We are always in a state of being. We are always thinking our feeling. If, as we've mentioned, we have around 70,000 thoughts a day, how many of those thoughts are we aware of? We can't possibly be aware of that many thoughts, thought flows through us until we get stuck on one and then we make it important. And then we add more thought to that thought until we feel overwhelmed.

Imagine a thought is like a snowflake. It lands and it melts. And another lands and melts. But imagine a flurry of snow falling and landing. Before long you would have a snowball. And that's what is happening with your thoughts. Instead of letting them melt away, you're having another and another until you have a head full of the same kind of thoughts.

So many clients have told me that when they see this for themselves, it is like a weight lifting off of their shoulders. But where did the weight come from? It isn't a physical thing (although it can cause physical symptoms) is it? It is the weight of the thousands and thousands of thoughts they have.

Thoughts about what has happened in the past and what might happen in the future.

Overwhelm is when you're buried under your own habitual thinking.

Tell me, have you ever been swamped by a feeling of overwhelm, worrying about something that has to be done, it could be a report that has to be written by tomorrow or starting a tricky legal case, and then a friend calls you or you're walking along the road and you see a child about to step out in front of an oncoming bus. What happens? Your mind immediately clears of the thoughts you were having and you chat to your friend or stop the child from being mown down. And then, when the conversation is finished or the danger has passed, you remind yourself of what you were feeling overwhelmed about and you feel that same feelings again.

Keep thinking about something doesn't make it true. But we get in to a trap of believing that we have to keep worrying about whatever it is that we're overwhelmed with. Because if we don't, we're somehow being irresponsible. We might forget the thing we're worrying about if we don't keep thinking about it. Bad things might happen if we don't worry, mightn't they? We have to keep worrying or things won't get done. Well, how about if things got done from a clear, calm mind? In fact, more gets done when you work from a clear mind.

We think that when we've noticed that we're having a thought, we have to engage with it. We have to look at it from every angle and add hundreds of other thoughts to it. How about if it didn't matter that you're having the thought? How about, rather than having to do something about the thought, you just didn't care that you are having the thought?

When you understand the thought/feeling connection, you can let go of the thinking and not feel the need to act on it. Thoughts are constructions, not instructions.

When we aren't living in the experience of the same thoughts, it feels as if we are stepping in to the unknown and that feels scary. We get into a habit of thinking that causes a habit of feeling. We've been conditioned to believe that the unknown is frightening and many of us were brought up on old adages like, better the devil you know, but the unknown is space to create new experiences and thoughts. Space to have fresh thought.

Life is a thought based experience. Even if you think that isn't true, you'd have to have a thought about it not being true to experience it.

Change happens when we change how we think and feel independent of the environment and circumstances around us. And when this happens, you feel empowered rather than overwhelmed.

Overwhelmed in your Relationship?

One area that almost everyone I have ever met gets overwhelmed in is relationships. This can be a relationship with a partner, a work colleague, a sibling or a child. We're talking about the relationship with work colleagues and children later so for now we'll concentrate on relationships with a partner.

Isn't having a relationship is good thing? So why do we get overwhelmed in relationships?

Interestingly, when we first meet a partner we are overwhelmed by loving thoughts about that person - and we never complain about that, do we?

Do you remember when you met your partner? You probably bored everyone around you to tears as you brought up their name in every conversation and never finished a sentence without telling everyone what he or she said.

Every time you thought about this special person, or every time you talked about the love of your life, you got a good feeling. So, of course, you wanted to keep thinking about this person and the things that they said or did because you liked the feeling that you got.

There is an area in the midbrain which, when prompted, sets off feelings of elation or desire. We stimulate the reward centre of the brain with these pleasurable thoughts which makes us want the feeling again and again. Basically, the more you think about nice things and more often you have the good feeling, the more your brain drives you to seek it out. This helps us to learn what we did to feel good so we'll know how to repeat the behavior to feel good again. Human beings are pleasure seekers and pleasure is key to the way we learn. When we get pleasure from an action we want to repeat the action.

But then you got used to having this person around and you stopped thinking about all the wonderful things they said or did that you like so much and slowly, over time, you started to think about all of the things that they said or did that you weren't so happy about and you wonder where that loving feeling went?

You know that you always get more of what you focus on and, if, when you think about your partner, all you can think about are the things that irritate you - guess what? Remember that you are always feeling your thinking - if you're thinking about the things that irritate and annoy you, it's impossible to get a happy feeling. Instead you get overwhelmed by feelings of irritation and anger.

Maybe you think that you're not being treated properly? You might get overwhelmed with resentful, angry thoughts about what your partner's behaviour is saying about how they feel about you. You might think that the other person isn't being as considerate as they could be, they aren't caring and they are being selfish.

You might start to think about how they should treat you and, unbidden, all the other times that they have acted badly to you, when they've looked at you in a certain way or have spoken harshly flood your mind. You run through all of the times that you've been hurt by them and each thought brings a fresh crop of thoughts and then you wonder why you feel bad.

You may not even be having thoughts about the way you think your partner is treating you, you may have old thoughts about the way a previous partner had treated you and these fill up your mind too.

Many people drag their old thinking into a new relationship and transfer this thinking on to the new partner. They expect the new partner to behave in the same way that the previous person did and guess what? That's what they see.

If you change your partner but you don't change your outlook on life, your perception about yourself or how you think that you're being treated, nothing will change.

If your relationship isn't working out and it really is time to finish, you still don't have to get overwhelmed.

No one gets overwhelmed by a new thought. But if you are having the same old thoughts, you'll have the same old feelings. You might start to think that you've got to leave or that you've got to make your partner leave. Where will you live? How will you manage? How will you tell your family and friends that this didn't work out? And what will happen to the holiday you've booked? Each of these thoughts plunge you further in to despair and overwhelm as your mood goes down. Of course you feel overwhelmed! It's too much to take in, too much to think about.

You can't possibly sort out everything that you need to do to get your life back on track from this state of mind. When your head is buzzing with a thousand thoughts, it's exhausting!

Imagine a jar filled with sand and water. If you pick up the jar and shake it, the water is murky and the sand is flying around and the whole jar is full of bits of sand. But what happens when you put the jar down and leave it alone? The sand settles at the bottom and the water is clear. This is like your mind, when you leave your thoughts alone to settle and you stop filling your head with a thousand different thoughts, all on the same theme, your mind clears and there is clarity. And clarity is the opposite of overwhelm.

How to get on with your partner - forever!

I often work with couples and when they first come to me they expect to tell me all of their grievances with the other person. Now if they want to stay together, how can it possibly help them to talk about what they don't like about the other person? If you sit down and have to listen to someone list of your 'faults', how is that going to make you feel more loving towards that person? All it can possibly do is make you feel more defensive and upset and add to the list of reasons that you don't like your partner.

When you're in this mood with your partner, is this the best time to be discussing your 'issues'? Because I'll bet as soon as you start discussing them, they certainly do become issues. How about waiting until your mood changes? If you stop thinking about how mean your partner is and you stop thinking about the issues, your mood will lift and then when you look at your 'issue' later, it may not seem as much of an issue. Lots of people think that they have to 'talk it out' and that the 'issues' have to be resolved or else you're in denial and are sweeping things under the carpet but when do any issues get resolved when you are coming at them from a place of upset and anger?

Have you ever been really upset about something that somebody has said or done but then you've been really busy and unable to keep thinking about the upset. Later, your mind goes back to whatever had upset you but you find that it doesn't really matter after all? Or you send an angry text or email when you're upset but then, later, you don't feel as angry and you wish you hadn't sent it?

At the moment of upset, you're engaged in your own personal thinking, you're overwhelmed with thoughts and feeling and it's very hard to see anything else beyond your own point of view. Now, getting engaged with your own crazy thinking is just, well, crazy. Can you resolve craziness?

When we don't feel as if our needs are being met by our partner, as we've mentioned earlier, we keep thinking about the wrong that is being done to us, you tell your partner how you feel and expect that they will see their wrong doing and admit their faults. You want them to admit that you're right and they're wrong.

But in that moment, they probably feel that they are right and you are wrong. Both of you are trying to make the other one see things from your point of view. But, there's the rub. Only you can possibly have your point of view because it's the way that you are seeing things. We always see things in a different way to anyone else because we're using our own filters to see things through. In a nano second we're bringing our experiences, values and opinions to play and we're seeing things in that light.

The truth is that we never have a relationship with anyone else. We only ever have a relationship with the way we *think* about that person. Don't be silly, you might say, I've got a relationship with my mother/partner/daughter/sister, they are real, I haven't made them up. No, of course you haven't made them up, they are made of flesh and blood just as you are. But does everybody see them in the same way? Does everyone see

your mother in the same light that you do? Do all of your friends think that your partner is as lovable or as awful as you do? How is it that one minute you can think that your partner is the best person on earth and the next minute you can't understand how you ever got together?

How about if you could see that the reason that you're getting so upset or angry with the other person is down to the way you are thinking about that person. Your thinking about the other person changes from minute to minute and as your thinking changes, your relationship changes. Have you got an ex that you were madly in love with once upon a time? When you were with that person, your feelings were real weren't they, so where did that feeling go? When you changed your mind, your feeling about the person changed. If they broke up with you and you were devastated, you probably kept thinking about them and the things you did and felt the pain of the breakup but, now, looking back, the pain has disappeared. And so has your thinking about them, I'll bet?

Why do we get Overwhelmed and Upset?

Our minds complicate things too much. Relationships are the most complicated things because we are always in our personal thinking about a relationship. We try to solve problems from our own perspective, not realising, as I've said before, at that moment that the other person is in their own reality bubble. Clients often ask me if not confronting a partner about an issue at the time means that they are 'letting them get away with it'. No, not at all. I am not advocating that anyone becomes a doormat and lets their partner 'get away' with bad behaviour or rudeness. I am advocating that when you're overwhelmed with your thinking about the issue, that isn't the time to talk about it.

Imagine that you're in a lift. When you travel down to the basement and the lift doors open, all you can see is darkness. There is no clarity at all. But if the lift travels up to the penthouse floor, when the doors open you have a panoramic view. You see everything. Where is the better place to think about issues? When you have no vision or when your point of view is expanded?

But, and I use this example because it truly has come up more than once with clients, supposing that a woman is feeling upset with her (in this case I am using the example of a male partner, bear with me if this sounds sexist but it is only an example) partner. She doesn't feel as if he listens to her, she isn't feeling loved or considered. Now it seems that in a lot of households, emptying the kitchen bin is the man's job - call me old fashioned, but it seems to be that way! And I'm getting even more sexist now, men rarely notice when the bin is full. So the woman is mentally festering on something that her partner has said or done, or even not done, and then she sees the man push something down in to the bin. And she thinks, 'Look at him. He's pushing that rubbish in to the bin even though he can see that the bin is full. All I ask him to do is empty the bin, he doesn't care that I do everything, that I clean the house, cook the meals, look after the kids (fill in the blanks) and all I ever ask is that he empties the bin. He doesn't care about me. He's never really cared about me'" and on and on. Whilst she's thinking these thoughts, her mood goes down and from this place she shouts at him, "Why don't you ever empty the bin?" You can see that her mood really doesn't have anything to do with the bin. It has to do with all of her thoughts about what the bin represents, how she thinks her partner feels about her.

Now the man hasn't noticed the bin was full and is shocked by this sudden outburst. So he retaliates and shouts back and before long they are in a full blown argument that has nothing to do with the bin.

So how about the same scenario, the woman is still upset and hurt by her thoughts about the man's behaviour to her. She sees him pushing the rubbish in to the bin and has an immediate reaction. But, she sees her reaction for what it is. She sees that she is lost in a thought storm about the man. She knows that thought isn't real and she doesn't have to make the thought mean anything. So she turns away and, rather than ruminating on the wrongs she thinks he's done and getting overwhelmed by the thousand thoughts, she gets on with something else and allows that thought to fade.

Later, when they're having a meal or watching something they both like on tv and her mood is light again, she says to him, "you know the bin is really full, do you want me to empty it this time?" (or whatever occurs to her) and the man, who isn't feeling attacked, will probably tell her that he hadn't noticed the full bin and he'll empty it now.

Do you remember the old Far Side cartoon with the man talking to the dog? Well, when you shout at your partner because of the way you're thinking about him or her, they rarely hear you, all they will hear is the anger and frustration in your voice and they will immediately have their own reaction and their own thought storm about what you're saying and how you're saying it. And they will rarely react the way you'd like them to.

You are far more likely to get what you want, not in a manipulative way, when you speak to someone about anything, but especially a grievance, when you speak from a good place and a quiet mind. Your partner will hear your words and not your mood. So no one is letting anyone else, 'get away with it.' When you're burdened and overwhelmed by your own thinking and then you project this on to the other person, it's like sneezing all over them. Not nice.

But I can't get over this!

Another time that people imagine that their partner has got away with something is when one of the couple has had an affair and, although they have decided to stay together, the injured party cannot let it go. That's when they think that if they let it go, their partner has got away with it. The innocent, injured one is hurt and angry and can't feel loving or happy towards the one that had the affair. They think that if they act in this way, their partner will think that they have been forgiven and the one that is suffering wants the other one to suffer too.

Firstly, you will never really know what is going on for another person, you won't know if they are suffering or not but acting from a place of spite, upset, hurt or anger isn't going to make that person suffer any more than they may already be. The innocent person keeps talking about what happened, asking questions, getting upset, trying to make their partner suffer as much as they are but who is suffering? Trying to make someone else suffer is like taking poison and expecting the other person to die.

If you both go out to work in the morning and the innocent party keeps thinking about the affair and getting more and more angry and upset, who is hurting?

The other person is just going about their day but you are poisoning yourself with your own thoughts. You might be plunged into sadness and despair a few times a day. But where is that feeling coming from? Not from the other person because they aren't there in front of you. Again, you're overwhelmed by your thinking about the affair and you're reacting to the thoughts you're having.

Sometimes people tell me that they keep picturing their partner with the other person but it isn't happening in front of them, they are making up the picture and then reacting to the made up scenario. Why would you do that to yourself?

All that happens is the innocent party lives in the torment of their own thinking and suffers all the time. If you truly want to stay with your partner in this situation, the only thing to do is to let go of the thoughts when they come up. Realise that you are heading down that same path and let go.

If you do want to stay with someone, despite whatever has happened, you have to be aware of the power of your own thoughts. When you start to feel wound up, upset or angry, realise that you've let your thoughts go down that familiar road and you know where it will lead you. As I've said before, just noticing your mood will help to shift your thoughts.

This relates back to the letting someone 'get away with it' feeling that we spoke about earlier but if your house is on fire, you don't pour petrol on it. I'm not saying that you don't have a right to feel angry and hurt but keep heaping inflammatory words and actions on to a bad situation is never going to turn it around. You can't regain a loving feeling towards someone that you're having angry or resentful thoughts about.

Only you will know if it's the right thing to stay with your partner but if you do want to stay together, why not enjoy the best relationship you can have?

Am I in the right Relationship?

When you notice that you're upset or angry, you know that you aren't in a clear mind and although it feels like a relationship problem, it feels as if your partner is the cause of your upset, it really isn't. It's a thinking problem.

I'm not encouraging anyone to stay with someone that they don't want to be with, I'm just pointing out how you can stay with someone and have a good relationship if that's what you want.

Have you found that your partner doesn't look very attractive when you're in a low frame of mind? When I wake up in the morning, I look at my partner and think he's gorgeous. Except some mornings when I wake up and look at him and I think, "Really?" Now strangely enough, he hasn't done anything to himself overnight, and even stranger, he looks gorgeous again a few minutes later.

Once upon a time when I believed whatever I was thinking was real, I would have made my feeling mean something. I wouldn't have believed that my feeling was coming from my thinking and that I could be fooled by my own thinking. I would have added a whole pile of thoughts on to the initial one and really believed that I was in the wrong relationship. Now I know that I am in the wrong head.

When you're in the wrong head, it's so easy to get overwhelmed with thoughts about how this relationship isn't right, how you might be better off on your own, or even with someone else. It's understandable to innocently believe that your feeling is telling you something. It is. It's telling you that you're in the wrong head! It's telling you that you have a head full of thinking and you're heading for overwhelm.

I once had a client who had been with his partner for 20 years. They had two teenage children and a home in the city and one in the country and had been very happy. But then his partner decided that they should be married and that not being married meant that he didn't love her and didn't want to be with her. He was very happy with her but started to worry that if they got married, things would change and they'd split up. So the more that his partner pushed for a wedding, the more he pulled away, which reinforced her feeling that he didn't care, and she got angry which reinforced his feeling that anything to do with a wedding was the beginning of the end.

He came to see me because he was living in high anxiety, he felt totally overwhelmed and he couldn't sleep. He told me that his anxiety came from his partner and, he said, as an example, that he had been sitting in his living room at home chatting to an old friend over a coffee when his partner walked in to the room. Immediately, he said, his insides tightened and he felt anxious. "Where did that feeling come from?" I asked. "Well, it came from her", he said. "Did you friend feel the same way?" I asked. The man looked confused, "well of course not," he said. "Then how did the feeling come from your partner?" I asked him. "Can you see that your feeling came from *your* thinking about your partner and what you think that she is thinking?"

You always need to look at your own thinking, not at someone else's. We think that if we love someone and they love us, they should think like us. But they are thinking the same thing! Remember, we're all living in our own thought bubble and when we appreciate this we can become far less reactive and stop thinking that someone has to behave in a certain way.

You don't have to *try* and do this, this understanding is built in to us at an innate level when you aren't blocking the understanding with your own thoughts, and it's very freeing. And when you recognise that the other person can't make you feel something that you don't want to, the relationship becomes easier and richer because you don't feel that you're giving up your 'power'.

This isn't disconnecting from your feelings. In fact, the opposite is true and you feel more connected.

Imagine that you are looking through a window and every thought you have is a scratch on the glass. How long before you can't see clearly out of the window? It's impossible to have clarity about a situation, whatever it is, when you are overwhelmed by your own thinking and can't see clearly/

If your partner is caught up with their own thinking and you can see this, you are less likely to take their mood or words personally. You can almost see the black cloud of thinking hanging over them and watch how they get more and more overwhelmed by it. You can feel compassion for them that they are caught up (but, whatever you do, do not tell them that it's just their thinking! Trust me, this isn't the moment to throw that one out!) and so you remain connected to them. You don't have to react and get in to the same kind of thinking that they are in, you can leave them to it and talk to them again when their mood has shifted.

It's easy to believe, when you're caught up in a bad feeling about your partner, that you'd be better off with someone else. But how many times have you, or your friends, left one partner and met someone else and, at first, everything is wonderful but then they turn out to be 'just like the last one'. When you don't realise where your experience is coming from, you will behave in the same way and get the same results. After all, if there is nothing on the television, you don't think that there is something wrong with the tv and get another one, do you?

The problem and the wonder of thought is that whatever we're thinking feels real. As I've mentioned before, our mind is the best special effects department in the world and while we're in the thought, it is real so it's easy to get confused and not believe that we are being tricked by our thinking when we're in the mood we're in. So just step back and allow your thoughts to clear, don't keep going over the same ones, and then see what kind of mood you're in half an hour later. If you let your thoughts clear and give yourself room for new, fresh thought, reality will look different.

If you want to feel close to your partner again, remember what you like about them? When you're upset or angry it's easy to imagine that there isn't anything you like but maybe it's their smile or how their hair feels? It doesn't have to be something big. Think about that rather than what they've done or said watch your mood shift. If you keep thinking about what you think is wrong with them, how do you expect to feel loving towards them?

When you notice that you're overthinking, the shift starts and your head begins to clear because you can see how futile and upsetting it is to keep going down the same path. The overwhelm disappears like smoke in the air and life becomes lighter.

Overwhelmed by your Children?

Parenting can be overwhelming.

Even if you immediately bond with your baby and fall instantly in love with this tiny person, you have still gone from someone who, although you may not have realised it, had time to read the paper or enjoy a cup of coffee to someone who hasn't had time to take a shower or brush their hair. And this is overwhelming. And there is the physical tiredness.

The brain numbing fog that you feel that you're living in and you can't remember what it was like to sleep through the night and you can't imagine that it will ever be possible again to sleep for more than a few hours again. And it doesn't matter how much you love your little one, it's so easy for your mood to dip when you're tired.

When you're physically tired, everything feels overwhelming. You could wail at the thought of washing up, it feels like such an effort. This is the perfect time to notice thought. If you find yourself in a low frame of mind, maybe you think that it's not fair that you're doing all the work, the night feeds, cooking and everything else that needs to happen and you start to spiral down in to an even lower mood. Stop! You're just tired! If you were the child, you'd put yourself to bed. Recognise that you have got caught up in a flurry of thought and give yourself a break. Physically and mentally. It really isn't going to matter if you eat beans on toast again and wear yesterday's socks. What happens is that you make it matter because you think that being tired and not wonder woman or superman means something about you. It means that you're failing.

Failing what? An idea that you had constructed about what it means to be a parent or what you've read should happen when you're a parent. Or, even, the perfect family that we see on adverts?

Parenting comes with a world of shoulds and projections of ourselves as good or bad parents. We get in to our thinking about what we imagine other people are thinking and, strangely enough, you never imagine that they are thinking that you're wonderful, do you?

How not to get Overwhelmed by the Terrible Twos!

So, you get through the baby stage and are hopefully patting yourself on the back when you hit toddler time.

This really is a time to let your child be your teacher. You know how it is if your child picks up something that isn't really safe for him to play with. You take it away and it's like the end of the world. Your child might scream and cry, throw himself on the floor and flail his arms and legs. Complete meltdown. And then he plays with something else. I'll bet no two year old ever goes to bed and thinks, 'I can't believe she took that toy away from me.'

Children are in the moment. Moment by moment. They are feeling their thinking moment by moment and aren't in the past or the future. That is the way we are designed to be and yet we block this ability with layers and layers of thought until we forget that we can be in the moment.

Toddlers aren't overwhelmed by the things that they think they have to do. That's because they don't know what they're supposed to do you might say, they have it easy. What? If I had to learn as many tasks in a day as children do, I would definitely be overwhelmed. Learn to walk, learn a language, learn to eat - all at once! It's at this time when children start thinking for themselves and challenging you with their behaviour that you get in to your own head about them. You get upset that they are upset with you. Why should they behave like this when you are doing everything for them? You start to react to your thoughts about their behaviour whilst getting fooled in to thinking that the behaviour is causing our feeling.

But, if you were really reacting to the behaviour, wouldn't you wonder why might be going on for the child that is causing them to act in this way? I'm not asking you to try and imagine what your children are thinking - good luck with that! No, I'm suggesting that if you wonder what might be going on for them, you can see that they are in a thought storm of their own at that moment and you can feel compassion for them. Parenting comes with a whole world of assumption and expectation. You have lots of ideas of how you think a parent or a child should behave and you believe these ideas are true. You then view the relationship through the lens of this expectation and wonder why you feel let down.

But you don't have to lock horns with your child. In frustration you might think that your child's behaviour is manipulative but if you connect with the child's reality, you will see that their behaviour makes sense to them. Rather than being angry, It would be good if you can show your child that when you lose it, it has nothing to do with your child but everything to do with your own state of mind. Explaining this to your child will show them that when they get upset or angry they don't have to fear these feelings and nor do they have to take these feelings seriously.

Of course, this isn't a green card to allow you or your children to kick off whenever it suits them but more to show them that getting overwhelmed and fooled by their thinking is normal and natural. They don't need to manage their feelings when they see where they come from. Giving the gift of being able to see thought for what it is, is a huge gift for your child. But the biggest gift you can give your children is presence. Be present to your child. Listen, and really listen. Don't technique your child by 'actively' listening. Active listening was high on a therapists lists once upon a time but being on the other side of someone who is actively listening is really irritating and isn't going to encourage communication. Just listen with nothing on your mind. Listening to your child when you're overwhelmed with your own thoughts and to do lists isn't listening.

Sometimes children will want to talk to you when you're in the middle of a thousand things and you might feel irritation build up as you start to get overwhelmed by thinking about how you have to do and how you haven't got time to listen and your brain starts to fizz.

But what you're forgetting is that you are already listening. To your own thoughts - and this is why you're feeling stressed and overwhelmed. You can only listen to one thing at a time and isn't it nicer to listen to your child? If you absolutely have to finish what you're doing, explain that to your child and ask them to come back in 5 or 10 minutes when you can give them all of your attention. The more that you do this, the more they will understand and a pattern will be set. If you do find yourself snapping or reacting in an angry way, you might regret it when the child is in bed and the situation has cooled. But don't keep thinking about what you did or didn't do all through the evening and in to the next day. Don't start the new day overwhelmed with what happened the day before.

Treat each day as a new day. Let go of any of the issues of the day before and let your mind clear. Common sense is just the sense you have when your mind is clear. The feelings that you might have of impatience and anger are coming from you rather than your children and noticing this wakes you up to the present moment and noticing them allows the old thoughts to disappear and get replaced by thoughts that give you a better feeling.

Just as I talked about earlier, you are not experiencing your children or your children's behaviour. You are experiencing your thinking about your children and their behaviour. If your child is 'misbehaving' and you're getting closer to breaking point, just stop. Stop whatever you're doing rather than trying to do more. You might be trying to dress a reluctant child whilst making breakfast for another and you know that you still have to get their packed lunch ready and you promised that you'd be in the office early today and then the reluctant dresser says that she doesn't want to go to school today and the mist is descending and you are feeling totally overwhelmed ... so stop. Just stop and let your head clear. Frustrated overwhelmed thinking is not going to solve anything, it will just add to the overwhelm. Knowing that, whatever state of mind that you're in, you're able to have a different state of mind in seconds is overwhelmingly good.

And the quicker you let go of your thinking, your mood clears as your mind clears and you are free. Free to be the kind of parent that you want to be. It doesn't matter how you were parented or how you have parented so far, when you wake up to the fact of thought, that you are the thinker, you can access your good feelings. Good feelings are hard wired in to you and can eliminate the arguments and power struggles. Just imagine how liberating that will be.

A good thing to remember, is that your children are thinkers as well, and their thinking changes and goes up and down too. At times they will be in a good mood and responsive and other times, they won't be in a good mood and won't be responsive. Neither of these states mean anything and, most importantly, they don't mean anything about you or your parenting skills. When you see that your child is acting out of speaking from their own insecure thoughts at that moment, you don't need to react to that behaviour. You can see the child - instead of the behaviour.

When you pay attention to whatever you're feeling, you can stop yourself from getting entangled in those overwhelming thoughts about the way your child is treating you or, about the kind of parent you are. You don't need to analyse your thinking, thoughts move too quickly for you to catch the present one but you always know what you're feeling, don't you? Your feeling and response to whatever your children are doing is always coming from you. And all you need is fresh thinking. When you get upset and angry with your child, you're reacting from the state of mind that you're in, but later, when your state of mind shifts, you might start to wonder why you acted that way because in the state of mind that you're now in, your behaviour doesn't make any sense. Hindsight is wonderful, isn't it. But rather than wish you could time travel back to a few hours ago, recognise how easy it is to get caught in a thought storm about your child's behaviour.

Teenagers

Another time parents get caught up and overwhelmed is when you have teenage children.

It's so easy to forget how difficult it is to be a teenager, when hormones are rampaging and you're stuck between being a child and an adult. Teenagers are often overwhelmed and the last thing either of you need is for you both to be caught up in overwhelm. If you've been lucky enough to share the nature of thought with your children when they were younger, your teenager won't be caught in this maelstrom of emotion because they will see where their reactions and impulses come from. And life can be a dance.

But if you have only just understood this for yourself, this isn't the time to try and educate your teen on the link between thought and feeling. Being on broadcast doesn't work with teens and the best thing that you can do is to show them. Show them that life is easier if you don't trust your thinking. That it's natural to have a reaction, but that it's what you do with the reaction that gives you your experience. When your son or daughter comes home and drops their

bag down in the hall, steps out of their shoes in the doorway, throws their coat on to the sofa and grunts at you, you might feel you have an angry reaction. After all, you've told them a thousand times to put their bag and coat away, haven't you, and you don't want to trip over their shoes. Why do they have to do this to you? You get instantly overwhelmed by thoughts of every other time that they throw their things down, are rude to you, don't appreciate all that you do and on and on. But they aren't doing anything to you. They aren't thinking about you.

They might be thinking about a boy or girl they fancy at school or how the teacher seems to be picking on them and they hate her. Or they might be thinking about what's in the fridge. Yes, that's right. You don't know what they're thinking. And you don't have to guess. Nor do you have to get upset and take their behaviour personally. If you react to them from the place of anger that you reached in a nano second, they will probably react in anger back at you and the scene is set for a wonderful argument. But when you see where your feeling of anger is coming from, you can see that it isn't coming from the coat, shoes, bag or messy room, or even from your child, it's coming from your thinking about the mess, and what you think the behaviour means about the way they feel about you.

When you let go of the feeling, the anger dissipates and you can ask your moody teenager to pick up their things from a settled, calm mind. They may still react from whatever thinking that they are in but you can see that it has nothing to do with you. Being a parent of a child of any age can be overwhelming. Whether they are a toddler, a teenager or an adult, as a parent you probably want to help them, fix them, make things right. If something goes wrong for them, you get in to your head about how you think that they must be feeling, you imagine that you feel their pain. But that is how you might

feel in the same situation and what they don't need in times of crisis, is to deal with your feelings about their situation..

So take a deep breath, close your mouth and open your arms and heart. And when you do this with a clear head, you won't feel overwhelmed, you'll be free to be the kind of parent you want to be.

Overwhelmed at Work?

How many get that Sunday night dread when you think about Monday morning? I've known people that started to get that Monday feeling as early as Saturday afternoon.

But how can you get overwhelmed on Saturday because you're going in to work on Monday? Yes, you've got it! It's the amazing power of thought again.

The whole Monday morning feeling really does emphasise how overwhelm is only ever coming from you. If you're feeling overwhelmed on Sunday by the thought of all the things that you have to do on Monday, how you don't like your boss, or your colleague really needs a new toothbrush, you can see that you're generating that feeling.

Maybe you worry that you're rated to see how well you are doing at work? But do you feel differently about the pressure of work on different days? There's a difference between the pressure you face and the pressure you feel and it's easy to think that you need to deal with the pressure of the situation at work. But you can't feel a situation, you feel your experience of a situation, so you're dealing with the pressure you feel. But what is different on the days that you don't feel under pressure, on those days dealing with pressure is not a problem because you might not even notice that you're under pressure and overwhelmed.

Why do so many people get overwhelmed in their working life? You might be the Company Chairman, the Personal Assistant, an Administrator or in a small business or working for yourself, it seems that everyone, regardless of position, feels overwhelmed at work occasionally.

Business problems are still problems of thinking but business is another area that people apply a lot of thinking to in order to think about a problem and the harder you think, the more you get locked in to that thinking and the harder it is to find an answer. But, as with everything, the way to find an answer is to stop thinking about the problem.

You must have heard the Einstein quote, "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." And this relates so well to your ability to solve problems at work. Something comes up, maybe it's a deadline or a problem with one of the team and the first instinct is to think about the problem but the more you think about the problem, the heavier your thinking becomes because instead of getting clarity, you're creating a thought storm that fills your head. You know that in this state of mind, problems are really hard to solve. You also know that depending on your state of mind when you think of the problem will define how big a problem it is or whether it is a problem at all!

Have you ever had a huge problem at work that you'd had to leave behind because you had tickets to the theatre? These tickets were really hard to come by and were very expensive and you can't possibly not use them. So you go off to the theatre and worry about the problem until the lights go down and then you find yourself immersed in the

production. You forget all about the problem until you leave to go home. Suddenly, the problem doesn't look very big at all. In fact the solution is staring you in the face. Why didn't you think of this before? Because you were overwhelmed by the perceived size of the problem and couldn't get clarity.

I had a colleague that took this understanding in to a large blue chip company and presented to industry leaders. When he asked them where they got their best ideas and solutions to problems, many of them answered, 'the shower'. Now this makes sense, doesn't it? When you're in the shower, you generally let go of the the thousands of thoughts and you're not in a thought storm. You're not feeling overwhelmed. My colleagues point was to demonstrate this but the CEO of the company who was sat at the back listening, asked my colleague in the break how they could add a clause in to the staff contract that everyone took longer showers.

Think about the fact that we're all in our own 70,000 thoughts. We're all in our own thought bubble. In our own reality bubble. In separate realities.

Imagine you're at a meeting and there are ten of you sitting around a table trying to find a solution to a problem, how many conversations do you think are happening? You might think that you're all in the same meeting, but really, you're all having an individual meeting inside your own head. And this is overwhelming.

When you recognise this, you can sit back and really listen to your colleagues without running your own internal dialogue and listening to that. And when you all sit and discuss the business problem with a clear mind, you are likely to come to a conclusion far quicker than you ever have before.

Overwhelmed by Work Colleagues?

Another way that people become overwhelmed at work is when they feel that they're being judged and they are judging themselves. It's understandable that you react to the things that people say and do and get in to a lot of thinking about whether someone else is doing their job properly, maybe you feel that they aren't doing their fair share of an allocated task and the bulk of the work is down to you. This can really send people into overwhelm.

Or maybe you think that a colleague or, even worse, someone in a higher position doesn't think that you're doing your job properly and you brood on this all day which will, naturally, impede your decision making and then you take these thoughts home with you and brood on them all night too. Adding more and more examples of when you think that he thinks you made mistakes.

No wonder you get overwhelmed!

If someone around you, either a colleague or a boss is stressed, you might feel their stress (although now you know that you can't feel their feeling or thinking, only your thinking about their thinking), they might appear judgmental but this is not the time to take things personally. When you see that they are stressed, you can see that they are being demanding and difficult because of the quality of their thinking. Maybe someone above them is giving them a hard time?

A client once told me that she was finding it really difficult to work with one of her colleagues. She and this woman had been teamed up to work on a project and my client found the woman to be lazy, sarcastic and superior. My client had two children and this woman, who didn't have children, was always making comments when my client had to leave work to get home to see her children or attend school events. My client was beginning to dread going in to work and struggling to come up with creative ideas for the project. In the end she made an appointment to see her line manager. She purposely made the appointment the day before she was due to take two days leave to go away for an extended weekend. She explained her predicament to her line manager and asked if this woman could be made aware of her behaviour. Her line manager agreed to speak to the woman in order to encourage peaceful and harmonious working conditions.

My client went away for her weekend and ruined the last day of her break as she spent the whole day on Sunday dreading going back in to work the next day, worrying about whether she should have broached the subject, how the woman felt about being called in to discuss her behaviour, what the atmosphere was going to be like and thousands of other thoughts. But on Monday, she shook those thoughts off and went in to work determined to get on with her job and be polite to her colleague.

To her surprise, nothing was mentioned about the meeting and the woman seemed genuinely pleased to see her. Buoyed by this unexpected reaction, my client dropped

all of her thinking about the meeting and found new ideas about the project bubbling up. The rest of the week continued in this vein and that weekend, my client found herself looking forward to work on Monday.

It wasn't until a few weeks later that my client had a chance to talk to her line manager. She had become very fond of the woman in this time. Her colleague had revealed herself to be funny and clever and they were becoming good friends as well as a strong team. When my client saw her manager, she was just about to express her thanks for the intervention when he apologised for not having the time to call the woman in for a meeting.

Because my client had assumed that the woman had been given a 'talking to', she felt a little bit guilty for allowing the situation to get so far and so was a little bit nicer to the woman than she had been before. She noticed how the woman had stopped coming out with sarcastic comments and she started to warm to her and rather than acting defensive she was opening up to her.

My client had changed the way she thought about the woman and their team work and changing her thoughts allowed her behaviour and feeling to change - and this was what allowed the other woman to change.

Amazing eh?

Overwhelmed by expectations at Work?

People get overwhelmed by expectations, meetings, goals and deadlines in the working world. But if you think that your job is overwhelming you, is this the same case every day? Or, are there days that seem easier than others? Why do you think this is? It's always going to be your thinking about the job that you're getting overwhelmed by. But it doesn't look like that, does it? It looks as if it's your boss or the hundreds of emails you've got to get through that's overwhelming you..

Ironically, people want to be effective in business without realising that what keeps them ineffective in business, is spending too much time thinking about things that they don't need to be thinking about. And this still doesn't look like thinking!

Do you make lists of all the things that you need to do? It's so easy to become overwhelmed by the 'to do' list without remembering that the list is made up. Yes, I know that you might have to keep to deadlines given to you by your boss and there is a time line that must be adhered to and it does help to write down the tasks that you have to do. But, If you're working on one task whilst you keep thinking about the next, it really will take you twice as long to complete that task. Clients have told me time and time again how they have gone from feeling really burdened by the amount of work they have to do, - to having more time in their day - just by clearing their mind of the thousands of thoughts that are buzzing around - and concentrating on what they have to do in front of them at that moment.

By all means, write down a list of things that you need to do today but remember that you have written the list and the list cannot give you a feeling. You're not overwhelmed by the things on the list. Only by your thoughts about what is on the list. Do the thing that you're doing and - put the rest of the things out of your mind until you move on to the next thing.

But what if you get hundreds of emails a day and you're expected to answer them all? Hmm, Are you really expected to answer all of them in one day? Do you feel the weight of all of these emails? Well, how is that working out? You have to answer the emails, I understand that. But thinking about how many emails there are and worrying about when you're going to get time to answer them, isn't getting them done, is it? When you look at the email list with a quiet mind, you can prioritise more easily and you can concentrate on the email in front of you rather than thinking about how you're going to answer the next three emails. Working in that way really is overwhelming.

And, of course, there is always at least one difficult person you need to deal with at work isn't there? Of course, it isn't me, I'm easy to get along with. And I'm sure that everyone has the same experience about me. Don't they?

This difficult person must be the exception to the idea that 100% of your experience is coming from the inside? After all, it's nothing to do with your thinking, that your boss difficult, is it, it's a fact. Lots of people think so. It's a fact,- like the fact that the sun rises

each day (of course, that's not a fact either is it. We know that the earth moves around the sun and the sun stays still but we still think of it as a fact. Because facts are true, aren't they?).

But if everything in your experience is coming from you, then it can't be a fact that your boss is difficult. For example, You know what it's like when you're watching a film or a programme that you're streaming and the film stops and you get that awful buffering, the dots go around in a circle before the signal comes back. Now, you know that, at that moment, the internet has poor signal strength. You don't get on the phone and call Netflix and tell them that there is something wrong with their channel. You can see that the problem is with the internet connection and not with the programme. And feeling as if someone is being difficult - well, that's just you - buffering. Your thinking at that moment isn't clear. You're not streaming the full picture and your feeling about the difficult person is a signal that your feeling is coming from inside you - and not from the difficult person.

So, whilst it might be difficult to get your head around this, you might get a bit of buffering, the people that you experience in work as difficult are the people that you have difficult thinking about. That's all. Because of past experience, you probably expect them to act in a difficult way every time you see them.

You might even get wound up just by thinking about that difficult person? Well how? That clearly isn't coming from the person because they're not even there, you're just thinking about them!

So How about, if, when you get that tight, uncomfortable, feeling about the difficult person, you notice the feeling and realise what kind of thinking you're in. You don't need to work to let the thoughts go, just noticing **that** you're having the thoughts will create a shift and the buffering will stop.

And so will your overwhelm.

So how *do* you Overcome Overwhelm?

So that's it. You can see that you never get overwhelmed by the things you're doing at this very moment - only by thinking about what you should be doing in the future or what you should have done in the past. In this very second you are just getting on with things.

We've looked at where overwhelm comes from, how it affects parenting, relationships and your work life, but have I said how you can avoid and overcome overwhelm? Well, it's easier than you might imagine.

I've talked a lot in this book about how we are always feeling our thinking and how our experience of life comes 100% from the inside, from us, and never from our circumstances, even though the evidence to support this view appears compelling.

I've talked about how we can look at things differently and how we put ourselves through a lot of anguish and strain when we get overwhelmed but now let's look at the feeling of overwhelm and at our thoughts through a scientific lens.

Your brain is made up of around 100 billion nerve cells called neurons. These neurons are their own biocomputer and can process hundreds of thousands of functions per second. As you learn new things in your life, your neurons make new connections which are called synaptic connections because the gap between the branch of one neuron and another is called a synapse.

Now I don't want you to get overwhelmed with too much science (get it, get it?) but I just want to demonstrate how science backs up all that I am saying about how thought creates feeling. Our thoughts produce chemicals (like dopamine and serotonin) that are called neurotransmitters and when we think, neurotransmitters cross the synaptic gap from one neuron to another which causes the neuron to fire information. If we continue to think the same thoughts that we had yesterday, (I hate my job, everyone else is having a better time than me, I've got too much to do, I wish I was single/married or whatever thoughts you habitually have), the neuron keeps firing in the same way.

But when you have a new thought, you change. You change chemically, genetically and neurologically. You can change your genes by thought alone.

So when you're having the same thoughts and have the same feelings of overwhelm every day, your brain is firing its neurons and activating the neural pathways in exactly the same way every day. This becomes automatic thinking and feeling. You're probably not even aware that you're doing it? These neural pathways have become hardwired and 'natural'. This is when you tell yourself that it's 'just the way I am'.

There is a saying in the scientific world that, 'nerves that fire together, wire together' (also known as Hebb's Law) so if you stay in the same thinking, you'll stay in the same feeling and can so you can imagine that this is your personality, your identity, rather than self created.

But this isn't the case and in order to change, it is important that you become conscious of your thinking and choices and start to view the world differently but this can feel uncomfortable because you don't feel like 'you'. As if your identity and personality was fixed and rigid which of course it isn't.

The unknown feels scary because the complex network of neurons that you have fired and wired every day up until this moment have formed memories and so you probably find yourself more in the past than in the moment. Just imagine that you have a difficult friend (or family member) who always wants something from you or always wants to whine about their life on the phone for an hour. As soon as their name flashes up on your phone, you probably have a reaction. 'Of course,' you might say, "I know how the call will go." But can you see that your reaction isn't to the name on the screen, it's to your memory of the times you've spoken to this person before. You get overwhelmed by the memories and not by the name on the screen.

Most people are using the same hardwired programmes that they used the day before, seeing the same people and maybe even having the same conversations so they are stuck in the same feelings and they blame these feelings on the environment that they live and work in, rather than seeing the the experience is generated by their thoughts and not from anything on the outside.

If you travel to work in your car and listen to the same radio programme as the day before playing the same music and adverts, or get on the same train and see the same people as they day before, as you do the same things, you might be thinking the same thoughts about a meeting that you've got to go to and how boring it will be, or wondering how many emails have come in since you last checked and how can you possibly get through them all when you have a mountain of work to do. Or thinking about the argument you had with your partner the night before or how boring your colleagues are, or a hundred different scenarios that are all very similar. Maybe you consider changing things and think about leaving your job or your partner but then you get overwhelmed by the thought of change and how difficult change will be so you carry on doing the same things, again and again.

You imagine that your external environment is controlling your internal environment. You can't imagine a different future because your thinking is based on your past and this limits any choices you may have in the present.

So, now the question is, how do you stop doing this? Well, this can't happen if you're living unconsciously and the only way to live consciously is to notice the feeling that you're in. When we're in a feeling of overwhelm, everything is an effort. If you're sitting on your sofa thinking about all of the things that you need to do at home and at work, of course you might feel overwhelmed, even the thought of washing up the dishes is too much. But you're not doing all of these things, are you? You're just thinking about them so notice the feeling that you're in and this will cause a shift. Bring yourself back to the moment, what are you doing right now? You can either get up and wash the dishes or tell yourself that you're going to do them tomorrow and let the thought go.

Be present to the moment. To right now. This very second.

And say goodbye to overwhelm.