**Feeling Overwhelmed at the end of 2024 (election results aren’t helping)**

**Gratitude Practice**

(Source: Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re in without Going Crazy by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone)

Answer each of the following sentences of gratitude:

* Some things I love about being alive on Earth are…
* A place that was magical to me as a child was…
* My favorite activities include…
* Someone who helped me believe in myself is or was…
* Some things I appreciate about myself are…

Book Suggestions:

Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself by Kristin Neff <https://a.co/d/dytWqXI>

Dr. Kristen Neff’s website: <https://self-compassion.org/>

Active Hope: How to face the mess we’re in with unexpected resilience and creative power <https://a.co/d/cTpsuJ2>

**Main list versus daily list**

The main ‘mind dump’ list most of us have is way too long to deal with on a daily basis. There are more items on that list than you can ever possibly finish in a day, week, or in months depending on how big your list is. By working from your master list on a daily or weekly basis you are setting yourself up to never feel like your work is finished. You need to build a smaller ‘working list” on a daily or weekly basis so you can feel like you have accomplished something.

First, organize your master list:

1. Look at each of the tasks on your master list and decide on a timeline for that task. Don’t get too specific, leave your time periods general, you are just trying to prioritize and organize your list, not add everything to your calendar.
2. Place each task in one of the following time periods:
   1. Soon: these need to be done first.,
   2. Next: when you have your “soon” items off the list, work on these next.
   3. Later: these are longer term tasks that can wait.
3. As you clear out tasks you can move tasks from Later to next, and from next to soon.

Second, give a smaller list a try:

1. Review your master list at the start of the day or week.
2. Pick 3-5 tasks from that list that you will try to accomplish each day or week.
3. Work through your shorter list of 3-5 tasks.
4. If you get all your tasks completed, return to your master list and add one task to your daily/weekly list.
5. If you finish this task, repeat step 4. Only add one extra task each time so you aren’t creating a long list of tasks you can’t complete before the end of the day.

Not finishing a long list can leave you feeling defeated. But using a shorter list, finishing it, and then adding tasks can help you get a sense of being “done” each day and able to head home with a clear head.

Finally, as you are working each day track your displacements. Displacement is the idea that when you add something to your list, or something distracts you during the day, something else on your list gets pushed back on your list, or pushed off your list completely.

Start tracking your displacements each day by adding them to your task list, or adding them beside your task list. At the end of your day when figuring out how much you got finished, and what is left on your list, look at your displacement list so you can better understand why you fell behind during the day.

**Managing Your Mental Health During Presidential Election Season** <https://youtu.be/8X7HSO4M9xk?si=awVlMMWM9lmZkcJd>

7:08 Big picture of how stress impacts our lives

10:00 Signs stress has turned into anxiety

10:55 Main drivers of stress around the election

14:15 Other mental health challenges and election anxiety

20:12 Self-care basics

24:17 When to reach out for professional help

25:42 ACT – Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

28:42 Relationships and dealing with microaggressions

31:14 Dealing with clients who insist on bringing political views into their work with you

34:15 How to support young people with election anxiety

39:22 how to cope after the election if your candidate didn’t win

41:10 an example of dealing with this stress and anxiety

 42:30 how can teachers handle this stress and anxiety?

44:52 neutral words you can use to discuss politics

46:17 how to respond when someone does trigger you

52:49 reaching out for help

**Stress and Elections notes from this video**

1. Take digital breaks
2. 30 minutes of election news in the morning. 30 minutes at night.
3. Read the news instead of watching it.
4. Avoid websites or news sources that you know trigger you.
5. Set boundaries ahead of time for social gatherings that may have contentious conversations. Be clear with people what you will and won’t discuss.
6. Deal with uncertainty around the future by thinking about what you can control. Focusing on things you can control can limit your overwhelm.
7. Make sure to follow your current mental health plan.
8. More social connections will help. Don’t isolate yourself.
9. Check in with your personal values and make sure you are following them daily.
10. Remember you can still do regular things:
11. Enjoy nature, family, hobbies, etc.
12. Work can keep you distracted – you are doing something.
13. Enjoy the other parts of your life.
14. Self-care basics:
15. Regular exercise: 30 minutes throughout the day, it doesn’t have to be all at once.
16. Get into nature and breath fresh air
17. Eat a regular healthy diet
18. Get a good night’s sleep
19. Try a relaxing activity
20. Meditation
21. Yoga
22. Set goals for yourself and follow through on them
23. Practice gratitude
24. Pay attention to all aspects of your life
25. Stay connected to social groups
26. Identify activities that break you out of the cycle of stressful doom scrolling
27. Reach out for professional help if:
28. Your election and stress anxiety continues for more than two weeks
29. It is tough to get out of bed
30. Your unable to work
31. Skipping personal hygiene
32. If clients persist on bringing politics into your work with them, have a discussion around the goals of your work together. What is your joint plan and focus for your time together?
33. Model good behaviour for adolescents:
34. Stay off your phone
35. Listen to their concerns and questions
36. Offer to talk to them about overwhelm
37. Don’t say “don’t think about it.” Set time to talk about it.
38. If you can’t connect with family due to different views, connect with like-minded people and communities so you feel like you belong.
39. Respect the process. Have civil conversations, respect other opinions.
40. Avoid triggering circumstances and do something else instead.
41. Have a plan to manage and keep balance over the coming days:
42. How will you handle triggers?
43. What will you do with your time?
44. What will you avoid?
45. If caught off guard and triggered: “I respect you, I don’t think this is a good time to have this conversation. I don’t like how this is making me feel. We need to stop this conversation now.”
46. Reach out for help:
47. Read helpful books
48. Watch helpful videos.
49. Get professional help if needed
50. Check out websites: APA.org, nimh.nih.gov, nami.org
51. Call into a helpline
52. Talk to your primary care physician
53. Talk to your therapist
54. Use telehealth
55. Talk to a mentor
56. Questions to ask:
57. What are some of your primary interests?
58. What were you enjoying in your life before this moment?
59. What values can you focus on in the coming days?

**AI Self-Reflection Questions**

Only thinking about you don’t like, or don’t want doesn’t provide enough helpful information. It does not tell you what you do want to happen. Use these questions to reflect on what you do want to happen, instead of focusing on what you don’t like and want after the election.

1. Write down a story with as much detail as possible about a time when you successfully worked through a crisis.
2. What did you value about yourself in this story? What did you value about others in this story?
3. Who can you reach out to in your trusted network to support you right now?
4. Which of your strengths can you use to work through stress and anxiety?
5. What opportunities do you have in the coming days that could help manage your stress and anxiety?
6. Imagine one month has passed since the election, what are you doing to successfully support yourself in feeling healthy and focused?
7. One month from now you are feeling healthier and hopeful for the future. What results have appeared in your life to help you feel this way?
8. What small actions can you take today and the next few days to get started on making this future a reality?