

# Feeling Overwhelmed?

*Follow this checklist when you find yourself hijacked by high intensity, highly unpleasant emotions.*

**Take a Breath:** (Even though your brain may say “Don’t tell me to freaking breathe!”) Calming the nervous system starts with breathing. Until the sympathetic nervous system deactivates, it will be hard to think clearly and therefore act intentionally.

**Name What You’re Feeling:** Rage, fury, panic? Remember, name it to tame it. The very act of labeling a feeling will start the process of reducing its grip on you.

**Find the Root Cause:** Sometimes, strong emotions are not about what’s happening in the moment, but something that happened before. Discerning a root cause can increase the possibility of saying or doing something that will improve the situation (rather than making it worse).

**Pick a regulation strategy and start using it:** Choose a strategy that fits the circumstance and that you can use in the moment. You might not be able to leave and go for a run in the middle of a meeting, but you can take a breath, feel your feet in your shoes, and imagine your Best Self. This will increase your chances of saying or doing something that works toward your goals, not against.

**Reflect:** Once you have down-regulated, observe the self-talk and behavior that were present when emotional anarchy overtook you. Review the PRIME goals as a way to determine the best strategies to use in moving from an unhelpful emotion to a more constructive emotional state.

**Learn and Apply:** Some of the most effective regulation strategies take planning and forethought. Implementing them now might prevent a blow-up in the future. In addition, pay attention to which strategies help you down-regulate effectively in the moment. With consistent regulation practice, you might find that emotional anarchy will come less often and when it does, you’ll be prepared.

This Guide is borrowed from the Emotion Life Lab, a complete digital learning system co-developed by the Mood Meter’s creators. For more information, see [www.ojilifelab.com](http://www.ojilifelab.com).

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