PUTTING IT ON PAPER

When Life Feels Full

A practical reflection on competing demands and available capacity

When several demands compete, everything can begin to feel equally urgent. Put the demands somewhere you can see them. Include unfinished decisions and worries, as well as tasks. You do not need to solve them while listing them. If you use this guide outdoors, stop somewhere comfortable to write. The aim is to find a more workable response to your present circumstances, rather than produce an impressive plan or become more productive at any cost.

What is asking for my attention?

Include tasks, decisions, worries and demands from other people.

What is my actual capacity this week?

Consider time, energy, health, money, caring responsibilities and existing commitments.

MAKING DISTINCTIONS

Urgency, consequence and influence

Choose the demands with real consequences or deadlines. Ask what makes each urgent and who set the expectation. A strong feeling of pressure may be worth investigating, but it is different from a deadline that cannot move. Then distinguish action from repeated monitoring. You may be able to request information or agree a review date without checking constantly. Where demands exceed capacity, the answer may involve changing the demands or seeking help, not working harder.

Which matters need attention first, and why?

Identify the consequence, deadline and action within your influence.

What can be postponed, reduced, shared or declined?

What conversation or practical arrangement would make that possible?

FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS

Make a plan you can live with

Choose a small number of priorities and leave some capacity unallocated. Allow for interruptions, slower days and the ordinary work of living. A useful plan includes what you will not try to do. Decide when you will review it rather than reassessing it all day. If you remain overwhelmed, consider who can help you change the circumstances or make decisions. Reflection can clarify a problem; it cannot supply resources that are missing.

What will I do, and what will I deliberately leave for now?

Name the next action and a realistic review time.

Who or what could make the load more manageable?

Specify a request, a source of advice, or a change in expectations.