The Secrets to Controlling Chaos in Your Everyday Life!

Alison Jacobson  
Motivational Speaker/Life Coach  
www.safetymom.com
Have you gotten to the point where there’s so much going on in your life that you feel paralyzed with stress? With smart phones, a 24-hour news cycle and non-stop status updates on social media, not to mention over-scheduled kids, constant demands from employers and family obligations, we can’t think straight anymore. Often it feels like we have a bunch of gerbils running around in our head on one of those little wheels.

We’re trying to be everything to everyone and, in the process, we’re literally making ourselves physically and emotionally sick.

As the caregiver for my husband with progressive multiple sclerosis, my intellectually disabled son and my two daughters, along with my business as a life coach, motivational speaker and blogger, my life is non-stop. It very well has the potential to quickly spiral out of control and into a whirlwind of chaos.

Fortunately I’ve learned how to calm the chaos and manage the madness. But, even more importantly, I live life with passion, always focused on peace and joy.

In my coaching sessions, I work with clients to “silence the gerbils” to become happy and confident. I’m pleased to offer you here some of my secrets on how to do this for yourself. But, in order to do it,

According to a report by the American Psychological Association, “prolonged periods of stress — which releases the hormone cortisol — can decrease proper cell function, thereby contributing to numerous emotional and physical disorders including depression, anxiety, heart attacks, stroke, hypertension and immune system disturbances that increase susceptibility to infections”

YOU NEED TO BE READY TO TAKE CHARGE AND TAKE CONTROL

Safetymom.com
The Secret to Controlling Chaos in Your Everyday Life

The Three “F’s” – Focus, Filter and Forget

Focus

It’s hard to focus on your priorities when you’re inundated with people and situations demanding your attention. But focus is crucial in order to regain your own balance and create calm. This requires clearing your head and quieting the noise so that you can prioritize and “clean house” of external stuff that’s creating the chaos.

Journaling

Have you ever felt as if there’s so much information and so many thoughts in your head that it’s about to explode? Getting it down on paper not only releases it out of your head but makes it more manageable. You don’t need an expensive notepad – any lined notebook will do. This is also not about writing a memoir or best-seller. You can jot down random thoughts, feelings that you have regarding a situation or a person, and even your hopes and dreams. What’s important is to get the concerns and stressors out of your head and onto paper.

Meditation

I have so many coaching clients say that they just can’t meditate – they “can’t shut their minds off.” Meditation

Some of the top CEO’s in the country attribute meditation to their success which is not surprising since studies have linked it to a decrease in blood pressure, reduction of chronic pain and the increase in circulation.
can take many forms, and can be done in as little as 5 minutes and, like anything else, it simply takes practice. There are guided meditations available for download and many that are free. Deepak Chopra, one of my favorite meditation gurus, often hosts 2-week free meditation series’. The best time to practice meditation is when you have the least amount of distractions. For me, that’s early in the morning before anyone else is awake. For others it might be once the kids go off to school or later in the evening. The key is to find a place that’s relaxing to you, and might include a scented candle, a plant or a small fountain.

**Variations on meditating**

Some meditations will have you focus on flexing and relaxing various sets of muscles. Others will have you envision a bright ball of light emanating from the top of your head and into your body. You can also imagine yourself in a location that makes you happy or peaceful. For me, it’s always near the ocean. Another way of meditating is repeating a “mantra.” Here are a few that I use:

- **“My life is filled with peace and joy”**
- **“I am in control of the events in my life”**
- **“I am love, I am abundance, I am health, I am peace”**

When you feel your mind getting distracted and drifting away, simply acknowledge the thoughts, release them and return to your mantra again.

**Breathe**

I know that sounds strange but have you ever noticed when you’re stressed your entire body tenses up? Practice taking 5 deep inhalations and exhalations while
you’re sitting at a traffic light, in a meeting or whenever you need to release tension.

Consider your diet

The ability to clear your head, focus and remain calm also requires fueling your body with the right kind of nourishment. I’ll admit, I’m the first one to reach for a glass of red wine and some dark chocolate – they are definitely my indulgences when I want to relax. But according to Clinical Nutritionist and owner of Comprehensive Nutrition Loryn Galardi, there are some other foods that are much better for keeping you calm and focused.

Turkey is a great source of tryptophan can help your brain produce the feel-good hormone serotonin to help you feel calm. Tryptophan is found in:

- Bananas
- Milk
- Cheese
- Certain nuts
- Sesame seeds.

Beef has high levels of B vitamins, including thiamin, folic acid and B12 which can help ward off moodiness, anxiety and fatigue. Vitamin B supplements can provide adequate amounts of the B’s, and so can other foods like:

- Pork
- Chicken
- Leafy greens
- Legumes
- Citrus fruits
- Rice
- Nuts
- Eggs

Not all carbohydrates are created equal. Whole grains/complex carbs such as brown rice or oatmeal increase production of serotonin in the brain and release sugar into the bloodstream gradually. Processed/simple carbs like bread, pasta, cereal and crackers spike glucose then flood the body with insulin, rapidly dropping blood sugar levels, leaving you fatigued, lightheaded and even depressed.
The Secret to Controlling Chaos in Your Everyday Life

Avoid caffeine as its energy boost is temporary and can decrease serotonin levels leading to depression and irritability. Steer clear of sugar as it is absorbed quickly into the bloodstream causing an initial surge of energy. As that surge wears off, the body increases its insulin production to remove the sugar from your bloodstream. The result: You’re left feeling tired and low.

Alcohol may seem to ease stress and anxiety but again, it’s only temporary. Alcohol is a depressant so if you do drink alcohol, do so in moderation.

**Yoga**

Yoga is the perfect activity for focusing and calming yourself. Before you say “*I don’t have time...*” trust me, it can be done at home in as little as 10 minutes. Yoga improves cognitive functioning, promotes deep relaxation, enhances concentration and mood, allows for peaceful alone time, and improves fitness. Try doing the Vipariti Kirani yoga pose where you lie on the floor and put your legs up against a wall. Not only does this give your body a good stretch, but it helps create a peace of mind as well.

A number of studies have shown that yoga can help reduce stress and anxiety. It can also enhance your mood and overall sense of well-being. Yoga can help reduce risk factors for chronic diseases, such as heart disease and high blood pressure. Yoga might also help alleviate chronic conditions, such as depression, pain, anxiety and insomnia.

**Visualization**

Once you’ve been able to clear your head and create calm, it’s time to visualize how you see your life in order to focus on successfully managing the day-to-day stress. This can be done by creating a vision board or, once again, journaling and writing out how you see your life unfolding. The vision board can
consist of photos you take yourself, pictures you cut out of magazines or find online. The images should reflect how you feel when you’re in control, happy and relaxed. Perhaps it’s photos of your family sitting around the dinner table. Maybe it’s images of a garden you always imagined growing. My image board has photos of my dream home overlooking the ocean and pictures of my family playing on the beach.

Filter

Once we’ve focused on how we envision our life, we need to filter out those distractions (both people and obligations) that are insignificant and unnecessary. That requires being able to say “no” to requests that are not enhancing our lives – volunteering for a charity, a lunch date with a friend who is constantly complaining and even an additional activity that our kids want to do. There are other things that MUST be factored in – your own doctor’s appointments, quiet time with your partner and kids and time for YOU.

Book an Appointment With YOU!

If we’re burdened down on a daily basis with our “To-Do” list exclusively focused on the mundane and obligatory items, it’s going to be difficult to enjoy life. Yes, we need to pay the bills, go to the office, chauffeur the kids to activities and make dinner. But we also need to balance that out with small things that we can look forward to and make the day more pleasurable. This can be as small as reading 10 pages of a book while taking a bath. Or maybe it’s going out for a 10 minute walk. Once you’ve finished school drop-off, stop by a coffee shop in a nearby town where you can sit in peace for a few minutes. These little acts are not indulgences, they’re essential to calm you down and keep you focused!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Must Be Done</th>
<th>What I'd Like To Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Manage your own expectations
Being organized not only helps de-clutter your mess, but also your mind. But too often we take on large projects that are so overwhelming that we don’t even start them. We end up feeling depressed and frustrated that nothing has gotten done. Instead, tackle a small job that you will be able to complete in a few hours and will give you a sense of accomplishment. Take ten minutes to organize the stack of papers piling up on your desk or fold the clothes that are all over the floor (two of my big ones.) Or, instead of trying to clean the entire family room, focus on one book shelf or drawer.

Stop the “Shoulds”
“Should” is probably one of the most guilt-inducing words in the English language. We all hear it in our head and it got there from our mothers, friends and the media. We want to take a nap because we’re exhausted but we “should” clean the house. We don’t really have time to volunteer at school but we “should” because that’s what all the other moms do. We’re miserable and overwhelmed but we “should” be happy because we bought whatever they were selling on TV and “they” swore we’d feel better.

What these “shoulds” really amount to are attempts to please someone else or conform to their image of who you should be. As soon as you catch yourself doing something you don’t have time for or don’t want to do, ask yourself where the “should” is coming from and if the action is really necessary.

Here are a few items to consider for your “ban the should” list:

- You can leave dirty dishes in the sink overnight.
- It’s OK for your kids to eat pizza three nights in a row
- If you don’t want to have Thanksgiving at your house, just say no
- If your idea of the perfect birthday is being by yourself without your kids or spouse, honor that feeling.
WE ARE NOT SUPER HEROES!

We can’t do everything by ourselves… nor should we.

Delegate and Delineate

Once you’ve written down everything that needs to be done it’s time to start sharing the load. Accomplishing everything that needs to be done requires the input of everyone in the house and that means right down to the youngest kids. My son has intellectual disabilities but he’s strong and I need his help since my husband has Progressive Multiple Sclerosis. He empties and stacks the dishwasher, takes out the trash and vacuums the house. And, he does his own laundry (he’s 15 by the way.) My daughter helps make dinner and helps her younger sister with homework. My little one is in charge of folding laundry, making snacks for school lunches and cleaning the bathrooms. Just as they have free time so do I. I have a home office and they understand when mom can’t be disturbed.

Not only will your kids enjoy having responsibilities and feeling needed, but you’ll be setting them up with important life skills that they’re not necessarily learning in school.

Below is an example of a chart that you can recreate to accommodate the number of people in your household and the various jobs. But the most important part is scheduling YOUR time!
# Daily Job Chart and Mom's Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Sun.</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>&quot;Me Time&quot;</td>
<td>10A - 12P</td>
<td>9A - 9:30A</td>
<td>7:30 - 8:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To-Do #1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To-Do #2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>Empty Dishwasher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fold Laundry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare snacks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>Feed Pets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take out Garbage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Driving Kids to Activities</td>
<td>10A - 12P</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2P - 4P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helping with homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7:30 - 8:30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Run errands</td>
<td>12P - 2P</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FORGET

Once you’ve focused on how you want your life to be and filtered out those things that are simply distractions and causing stress, it’s time to forget them. This takes us right back to the meditation – focusing on the present moment. We’re so wrapped up thinking about what we need to do next week, next month or next year that we aren’t enjoying the NOW.

Make a commitment to love yourself enough to accept your limitations.

Let go of worry and fear. Relax into the knowledge that you are perfect as you are and those who love you honor your boundaries.

Living in the present moment completely eliminates worry and fear. The question to ask yourself is, “Am I OK right at this moment?” The answer is almost always YES!

Alison Jacobson

safetymom.com
CONCLUSION

As they say, old habits die hard. Your life didn’t become chaotic overnight and it will take time to create a new reality. Congratulate yourself on small steps and be easy on yourself during those times when life once again gets out of control. Remember, you’re not just changing the way you live but also altering the way life has been for your family. Creating your boundaries will most certainly be met with resistance if you’re asking your kids and spouse to step up to the plate and take on more responsibility. But stay strong and you will persevere!