

## Overwhelm

Often we **do** the behaviour of overwhelm, rather than **be** genuinely overwhelmed. We freeze and don't achieve anything because we don't know where to begin.

### 15-minute magic

Consider these statistics, which have been found in various studies:

- 40 per cent of the things we worry about never happen
- 30 per cent of the things we worry about have already happened
- 12 per cent of our worries are needless worries, such as what someone else thinks about us
- 10 per cent of our worries are unimportant or petty, such as what's for dinner, being late or what to wear
- 8 per cent of our worries actually happen (4 per cent are things beyond our control, while 4 per cent are things we can control, such as the outcome of our decisions)

Spend a few minutes writing a list of all of the worries, concerns or anxious thoughts with which you are currently dealing. Be sure just to 'dump' all of these on your list without judgment or priority.

Next, using the guide below, classify each of your current concerns into one of the five categories:

1. things that have already happened and cannot be changed
2. needless worries (e.g. what someone thinks of you)
3. petty and unimportant worries (e.g. what to wear, being late, what's for dinner)
4. situations that are likely to occur but over which you have no influence (e.g. getting sick, death of a loved one, natural disasters)
5. situations over which you do have control.

Notice any wasted time and energy being spent on situations that are in the past or are beyond your influence. Complete this task by focusing now only on the issues over which you do have influence, and write a list of actions you can take to improve those situations.

# The 7 Mindset Gremlins that hold us back

## Procrastination

When we put things off, we create a false sense of urgency/excitement by having an artificial deadline. Meanwhile, the time we spend on other things isn't enjoyable as we know we still have to get things done.

### 15-minute magic

Use the '**Zeigarnik effect**' — the human compulsion to finish what you start — by throwing yourself into any aspect of a big task that you're putting off, just for 15 minutes. Let go of the need to get it 'right' or 'perfect'. Let go of having to begin at a certain point, or imagining you need more information in order to begin. This is about starting before you're 'ready', starting imperfectly, starting anywhere along the process ... just starting.

The exercise is not about what you produce during this time (that really doesn't matter). It's about opening up the suspense in your mind. This project or task will now be active. You've done something towards it, so it's going to be harder to leave it alone because we worry about tasks for which we have not achieved closure. Procrastinating will now become more difficult.

Use this strategy any time you're facing something big and putting it off. By taking the focus off the quality of your work and simply opening the gates and getting into any part of the task, you'll have engaged your brain and it won't want to quit.

# The 7 Mindset Gremlins that hold us back

## Perfectionism

If we can't get it right, it's safer not to try. Or, if we do try, we fixate on being 100% accurate, at the expense of progress and timeliness.

### 15-minute magic

At some point in your life, everything was new. Primary school. High school. Work. Relationships. Completing your tax return. There was a time when even the most ordinary, everyday things, had never been done before. And now you do them, often mindlessly, without issue.

We often put pressure on ourselves to do things well, or even 'perfectly'. We can loosen this up by giving ourselves permission to be beginners.

- Choose an activity that is new to you, in which you're not invested at all (that is, it really doesn't matter to you whether you succeed or fail — it's only for fun). Perhaps it's making a soufflé, going rock-climbing or singing karaoke, making some pottery or riding a skateboard.
- Throw yourself in, laugh and enjoy your clumsy attempts as a 'newbie'. Who knows — you might find you're a natural!

## Comparison-itis

Everything we do is measured beside what other people do. We're not able to judge our own worth, or the worth of our work, without comparing it to someone else.

### 15-minute magic

Scientists have found direct links between our physiology and emotions. Smiling has been found to reduce stress and increase wellbeing, and Harvard researcher Amy J.C. Cuddy was one of the researchers who conducted a 2010 experiment into the impact of 'power poses' on confidence.

When participants in the study took just 2 minutes to stand confidently — in a tall, expansive posture, like the classic 'superhero' pose with their chins up and arms strong beside them — they not only reported feeling stronger and took more risks as part of the experiment, but their measurable testosterone levels increased and the stress hormone, cortisol, dropped. Standing in a 'power pose' literally gave them an extra surge of power and a sense of wellbeing.

'The poses we used in the experiment are strongly associated across the animal kingdom with high and low dominance for very straightforward evolutionary reasons,' Dr Cuddy explained in a Harvard Business Review article. 'Either you want to be big because you're in charge, or you want to close in and hide your vital organs because you're not in charge.' The technique can be used ahead of situations in which we typically feel nervous, like job interviews or key presentations.

- Suspend disbelief and spend some time standing in a 'power pose' — tall, chin up, strong arms. Really get 'out of your head' and 'into your body' and let your subconscious mind do its stuff.
- Observe how you feel afterwards, and over the course of the next few days (or weeks) aim for fifteen powerful moments when you shift your body or emotions and feel the positive benefits of being mindful of your physicality.
- Mindfully acknowledge those times when you're required to step up and do something nerve-wracking.

# The 7 Mindset Gremlins that hold us back

## Imposter Syndrome

That belief that we're not ready/prepared/qualified for where we are, we don't know what we're doing and, any minute now, we're going to be found out.

### 15-minute magic

Create what our friend and colleague, Angela Raspass, calls a Fabulous File. This is a box or folder into which you save print-outs of positive feedback, nice emails, expressions of thanks and appreciation, copies of awards, thank you cards and other examples of your successes that you can browse through any time you need a confidence boost.

- Find a box or folder that suits your purpose.
- Invest 15 minutes to begin the collation of your **'fabulousness'**. Be sure to schedule more time in your diary to complete the task later, if necessary, and from now on, print and collect evidence as you go.
- Immerse yourself in the wonderfully genuine feelings of gratitude and appreciation this task will induce.

# The 7 Mindset Gremlins that hold us back

## Fear of failure

It's easier not to try than to try and fail. We won't go for promotions or attempt new things in case it doesn't work out.

### 15-minute magic

'You may encounter many defeats,' said Maya Angelou, 'but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it.'

Failure takes on many shapes and forms. Sometimes failings are small and inconsequential. Other experiences of failure are life-changing milestones, creating unexpected outcomes. Regardless, accepting — in fact, embracing — failure as a natural occurrence, and one which can bring growth and new opportunities, is essential if we are to reach our true potential.

Earlier, we shared with you some of our failures, and there were many more we didn't include. Now it's time for you to shine a light, albeit briefly, on your failures and look for the humour and lessons, noticing how far you have come.

1. Spend 15 minutes considering the events, decisions and actions that you would classify as failures in your life and write a list.
2. Once you've done this, reflect on how easy or difficult was it for you to create this list. How many of the items were truly failures and how many ultimately led to better outcomes for you? Which of them has lessened in potency or seriousness as time has passed.

# The 7 Mindset Gremlins that hold us back

## Fear of success

We really want to do something new/bigger. But, when we imagine the changes that might occur as a result of it (we'll have more responsibility/pressure, people might look at us differently) we retreat into the comfort zone.

### 15-minute magic

First, consider in just a few words the 'big picture' legacy you wish to leave. When you look back at the end of your life on your contribution to the people around you personally and professionally — and to the wider community and the world — what do you want to be able to say that you did? Write it down. (This is a 15-minute task, so you're going for some broad ideas here, not an intricate, word-perfect plan.)

Now look at your calendar or diary and ask whether the choices you're making now are going to allow you to leave that kind of legacy. Is all the running around that you're doing for others moving you towards leaving the legacy that means a lot to you, or further away from it? If some change is needed, begin with small shifts in your boundaries. It's almost certainly possible to extricate yourself from some of the things to which you're already committed, though it's easier to start from now and shape things differently with future requests. Look for opportunities to say no and give meaning to your 'yes'. Find and act upon:

- something you can cancel
- something you can postpone
- something you can delegate.