

When Everything Feels Like Too Much

A practical guide for when you're overwhelmed

by Don James · hotcoffeewithdon.com

Hey.

I wrote this at 2am when I needed it myself. It's short, honest, and there's no toxic positivity in it. If you're reading this, something is probably hard right now. That's okay. Let's get through the next few minutes.

This guide has five sections. You don't have to read them in order. Go to whatever you need.

1. If you're in crisis right now

If you're thinking about hurting yourself or someone else, please reach out now:

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text **988** (US)

Crisis Text Line: text **HOME** to **741741**

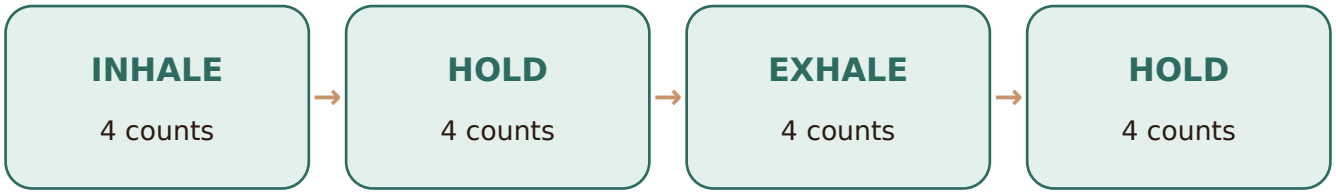
Emergency: call **911**

Outside the US: findahelpline.com

You don't have to be "suicidal enough" to call. If you're struggling, that's enough.

2. Box breathing (do this first)

When your nervous system is fired up, your brain can't think straight. This resets it in about 90 seconds. It's used by Navy SEALs and also by me, in my car, in parking lots. No judgment.



Repeat 4 times. That's it. 90 seconds.

3. The 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique

When you're spiraling, this pulls you back into your body and out of your head. Works for anxious moments, racing thoughts, and "staring at the ceiling at 3am" situations.

5	**Things you can SEE** Look around. Name them out loud if you can. The lamp. The ceiling fan. Your hands.
4	**Things you can TOUCH** Feel them. The texture of your shirt. The chair under you. Something cold or warm.
3	**Things you can HEAR** Stop and actually listen. Traffic. Hum of the fridge. Your own breathing.
2	**Things you can SMELL** Find something. Coffee. Your hand lotion. Open a window if you need to.
1	**Thing you can TASTE** Get a drink of water. A piece of gum. Bring yourself fully into the moment.

4. Don's 3-Thing Rule

When everything feels urgent and impossible at the same time, your brain locks up. The 3-Thing Rule breaks the freeze.

Step 1 Write down everything that feels overwhelming.

Step 2 Circle the 3 most important things on that list.

Step 3 Cross out everything else. Those don't exist today.

Step 4 Of the 3, pick the ONE you'll do in the next hour.

Everything else can wait. I promise.

This works because overwhelm is almost always a prioritization problem, not a capacity problem. You can handle more than you think. You just can't handle everything at once.

5. When you need a human

Sometimes a guide isn't enough. Sometimes you just need to talk to a real person who isn't going to panic or judge you or immediately tell you to see a therapist (though therapists are great, for the record).

That's what I'm here for. Book a free 10-minute call. No prep needed. No agenda. Just show up and we'll figure out the next small step together.

Book a free 10-minute coffee chat

hotcoffeewithdon.com/book

No pitch. No pressure. Just a real conversation.

If this guide helped you, consider sharing it with someone who needs it. And if you'd like to support more free conversations, there's a tip jar at hotcoffeewithdon.com/support. Every cup counts.

This guide is not therapy, medical advice, or a substitute for professional care. If you're in danger, call 911 or call or text 988.