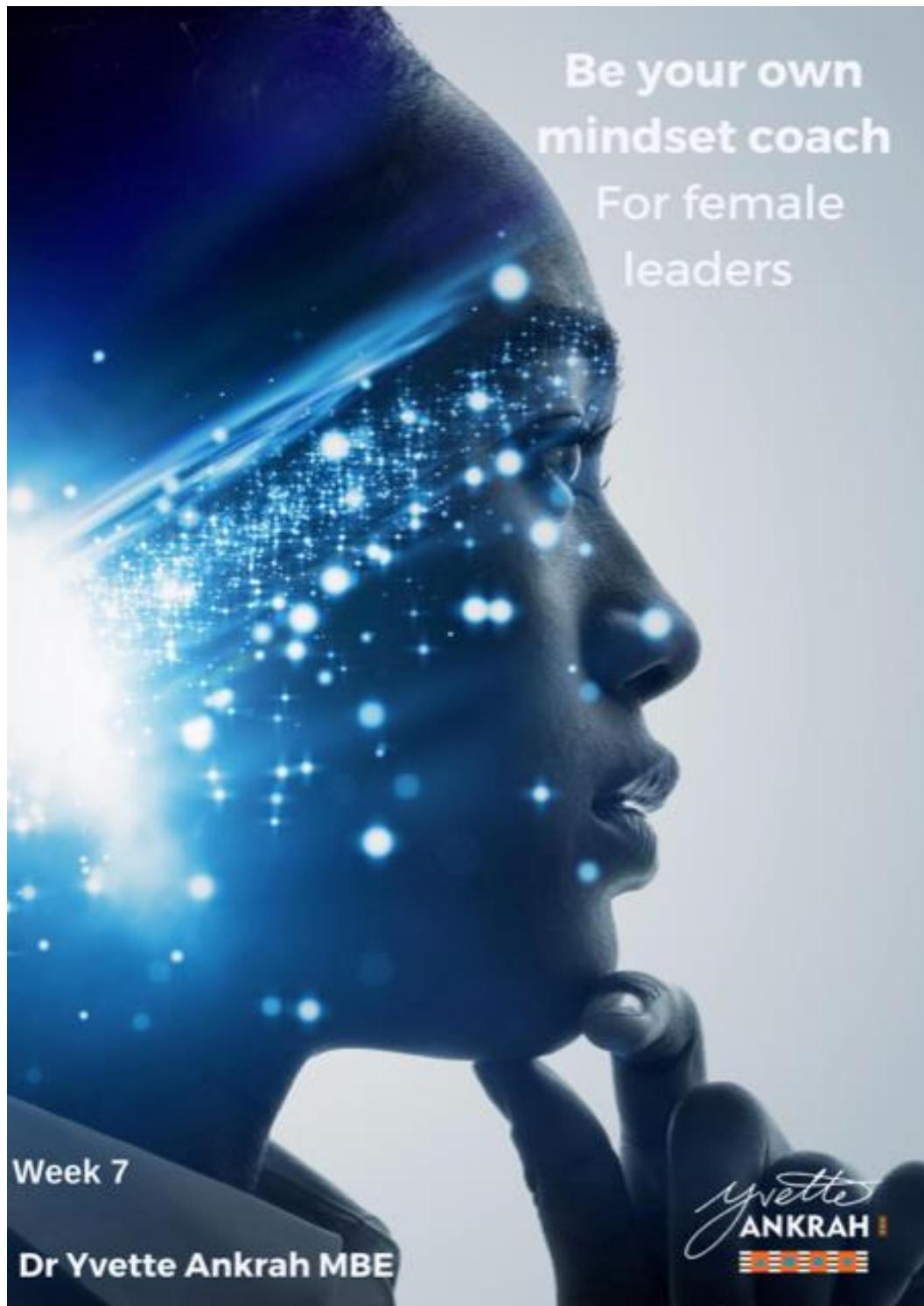




Week 7

Blocks to progress

Week Seven

Blocks the progress

This week is all about examining blocks such as perfectionism, procrastination and overwhelm itself, that may hold you back and can stop you achieving the goals that you created.

Last week we looked at beliefs that you might hold about yourself that can stop you achieving what you want.

In this session we are going to explore tools and techniques that you can use that can help you stop some behaviours so you can move past them and no longer respond in the same way. This all in the about learning new ways to achieve your goals.

BLOCKS TO PROGRESS

I have outlined here some of the key blocks that stop people achieving and provided techniques to help you move forward. If for example procrastination is something you feel is a problem, start with that section and apply the tools/techniques to your work in the week and see what the impact is on your productivity.

Key Blocks

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PROCRASTINATION

Why do we procrastinate? It is a way of avoiding things that we consider to be hard. Even though we know there may be consequences to not getting stuff done on time, we will still push a deadline, say we will do it tomorrow and then wonder why it is still staring up at us from the to-do list!

What things do you procrastinate about? List them below

THREE DIFFERENT METHODS FOR ELIMINATING PROCRASTINATION

1. The Five- Minute Miracle

Best for: those that really struggle with procrastination

This uses the Zeigarnik effect to get you started and to complete the task. The Zeigarnik effect is a psychological phenomenon which shows that unfinished tasks are more likely to get stuck in your memory. Therefore, we spend a lot of time thinking about what we have not done!

To use this technique, you need to think about one action you can take in less than five minutes, today, that will move you forward even the smallest amount.

Once you've identified what you're going to do, set a timer for five minutes and then work on that task for that five minutes. Once you start doing it you are more likely to finish it.

Those five minutes make a huge difference and can kickstart a task that has been gathering dust for a while.

2. Productive procrastination (adapted from psychologist Nick Wignall)

Best for: those that have negative emotions about the procrastination, i.e. you beat yourself up about not getting stuff done and worry about what you do not get done

This technique uses three effective but counterintuitive techniques that get you to work with the desire to procrastinate instead of fighting against it:

They include:

- Reframing negative self-talk about procrastination
- Consistent Procrastination
- Cultivating work-interest synergies.

STEP 1: Eliminate the negative self- talk when you feel the urge to procrastinate

If you struggle with procrastination, it's possible that you have created some unhelpful habits around how you speak to yourself about your procrastination. You might find that you can be supercritical of yourself. However, this self-talk adds to the negative emotion that you already feel!

Time to change the script - if you find yourself having negative self-talk change that thought to something realistic as an alternative such as:

- It's true that I tend to procrastinate with coursework. But I can be very disciplined in other areas of my life like sports.

- I am struggling with procrastination right now, but I'm also taking proactive steps to work on it.
- Some of the most productive, accomplished people in history also struggled with procrastination.

STEP 2: Be consistent with your procrastination

Instead of seeing your procrastination as a flaw or problem, see it as a desire to be curious and to find interesting ways of doing things.

By making time regularly to engage the different things that interest you, you will feel less likely to indulge them using procrastination when you have another task that you need to do.

How you do this? By allowing yourself to intentionally procrastinate regularly, so for example, you work on something for one hour and then spent 10 minutes indulging your procrastination without feeling any guilt.

STEP 3. Find an interest that synergises with your work

How is it that some people manage to still be productive even though they procrastinate? The difference between those who are productive and those who are not is *what* they are doing when they procrastinate.

Consider two different procrastinators, both of whom, might be consultants who advise small businesses

- Procrastinator A indulges the urge to procrastinate on their admin by playing video games and binge-watching Netflix.
- Procrastinator B indulges the urge to procrastinate by reading blogs about new trends in their area and attending webinars.

In both cases, procrastination will lead to a loss of productivity. But in the case of Procrastinator B, their interests have synergies or are complementary with their work.

If they decided to launch a new service in addition to what they do, the interest and time spent “procrastinating” with blogs and webinars would turn out to be useful and productive in the long run.

If you can create hobbies and interests that are indirectly supportive of your primary work, whenever you do procrastinate, you'll be doing so productively.

“But more than a set of techniques, productive procrastination is also a mindset. It's a way of looking at procrastination not as virus or disease, but as a natural human inclination that can be channelled productively.”

3. The Seinfeld Method (adapted from psychologist Nick Wignall)

Best for: people who find it hard to be consistent with their goals and wish to create a new habit

The Seinfeld Method was created by successful (and productive) comedian Jerry Seinfeld and is seen as the best technique out there for staying consistent with your work. It is how he was able to consistently produce material for his comedy act and TV shows year after year.

Jerry Seinfeld would use a big wall calendar when he was creating however you can use a notebook or journal to track your goals

To get started, draw out a simple grid (if you're not using a wall calendar)

- In the first column write *Date*, and in the second column, put the label of the thing you want to do every day (e.g.: write 500 words, practice guitar for 20 min, etc).
- Keep your notebook, journal, or calendar in a highly visible, accessible spot near where you work.
- Immediately after you complete the task, mark it off in some way - this can be with a checkmark, filling in a square, or whatever makes sense to you!
- See it as a game. The more days in a row you achieve your goal the better.
- If you do happen to miss a day (everybody's human!), mark the length of your streak next to that day e.g. it could 12 days in a row. This number now becomes your next goal (i.e. make it at least 12 days without breaking the streak).

"By keeping a pen and paper record of your daily goal you are: A) More likely to stay mindful of your goal and remember to do it each day, and B) More likely to stay consistent since it's positively reinforcing and rewarding to see a visible sign of your progress over time."

Date	Task	Completed

Tips for success

1 Set boundaries to manage your time

- For example, email is a big-time drainer for many. You may choose to only deal with email for two hours per week. If that feels too extreme start by only looking at them at a specific time of the day. Disable pop-ups that tell you 'you have mail' and use autoresponders so people know when you will respond.
- Facebook, Twitter etc. need boundaries as well – you can schedule your posts and tweets to free up time. Some apps can lock you out of social media or the internet so you can focus on work e.g. *StayFocusd* or *Freedom*.

2 Batch Tasks

- Allocate time to focus on one task and do it all in one go. For example, you can do all your invoices on one day or write a series of blog posts.

3 Break down tasks

Much easier to do a smaller task than attempting to tackle a large project all in one go.

3 Rewards

- As human beings, we love rewards and treats! Give yourself a treat once you've completed a task or a series of tasks. Decide what constitutes a treat for you and be mindful of not developing new unhelpful habits.

Do something that will make you smile!



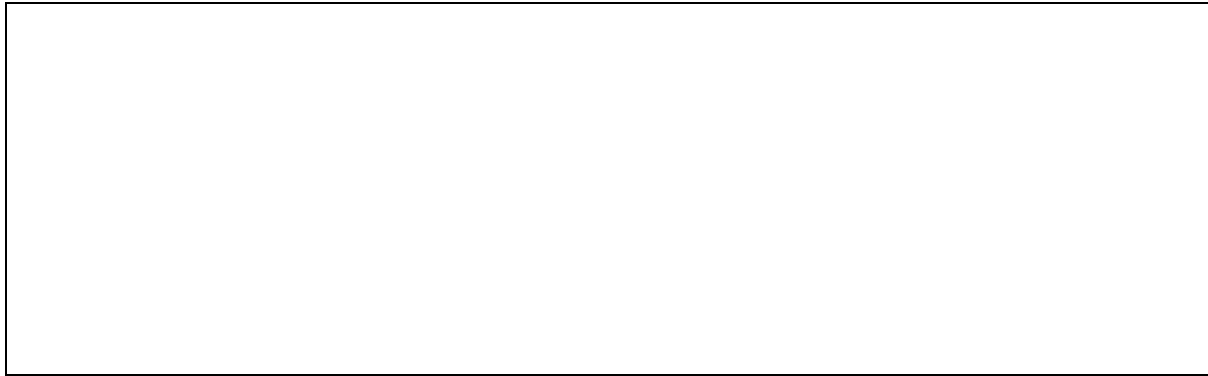
The desire for perfection is often linked to emotion and there are three main types of perfectionist behaviours:

1. Self-oriented perfectionism: Imposing an irrational desire to be perfect on oneself.
2. Other-oriented perfectionism: Placing unrealistic standards of perfection on others.
3. Socially prescribed perfectionism: Perceiving excessive expectations of perfection from others.

This section will focus on self-perfection: the need for perfection was often started in childhood and developed as a protection mechanism. The body is always doing what it thinks is for your highest good. What starts as a protection mechanism can develop into a lifelong habit.

Focusing on perfection stops you achieving because you are doing busy work and if the emotion behind it is one of fear - fear of failure, disappointing others, judgement - you will continually cycle around the task and avoid finishing and putting the information out there.

What tasks bring out the perfectionist in you?



Here are three things to think about:

1 Know your purpose – realistic goals

What is it you are trying to do? Have you set a SMART goal? Once you have a good idea of what you are trying to achieve you know when you can stop. It is important that you set a realistic goal so you are setting yourself up for success.

2 Good enough is ok

This is where you focus on the 80/20 rule. When you hit 80% that is good enough. Focusing on getting that 20% perfect stops you delivering your task.

As a perfectionist, you may have achieved your goal, but you keep going because you think it is not good enough.

Stop. Go back to point one and review!

Remember when you think something is not good enough, think about who is it not good enough for?

3 Mistakes are great are learning tools

You make a mistake. Instead of dwelling on the negative, what can you take from the experience? Making a mistake provides you with great learning experiences and enables you to develop yourself and your business. By creating a growth mindset, you transform failure from a negative experience to learning one. Be kind to yourself and change your self-talk (see page 5).

There is nothing wrong with wanting something to be the best it can be, it only becomes a problem when it stops you delivering what you need to and achieving your goals.

It is not about dropping your standards it is about approaching tasks with different intention and emotions.

TACKLING SELF-DOUBT – STEPS TO BANISH THE 'IMPOSTER'



Photo by [sydney Rae](#) on [Unsplash](#)

There is an epic match taking place today. In the blue corner is self-doubt. Dressed in dirty tracksuit bottoms, a top covered with a variety of stains. Her hair is uncombed and in one hand she is brandishing bills and receipts. She's yelling obscenities and getting into the trash-talking:

"You'll never be successful"

"Who do you think you are?"

"Why would anyone want to work with you?"

"They'll figure out you're a fraud"

In the red corner is self-belief. Dressed to kill in a figure-flattering dress with coordinated heels and bag. Hair done, and make-up immaculate. Poised and calm she feels no reason to raise her voice as she puts her point across:

"I am the expert in what I do"

"People want the service I provide"

"I know what success is for me and I plan to achieve it"

"I will overcome any obstacles because my dream is worth fighting for"

As a woman in business, this battle gets fought a lot – this kind of doubt is known as the *imposter syndrome* (it's actually the imposter phenomenon). Not believing that you are good enough to have the success you have or that people will 'find you out' and stop wanting to work with you or buying from you. It happens in all walks of life and not just for those who run their businesses.

The trouble is we often listen to the loud and negative self-doubt and self-belief doesn't get the credit she deserves.

The voice of doubt, fear that we will be 'found out' and negativity stems from so many avenues - childhood, past jobs and experiences, partners, family and friends. It is often a reaction to finding yourself in a specific situation, for example, a woman working in an all-male environment or speaking in front of a large audience as a small business owner.

This is felt by people in all walks of life but is particularly high in women. Some high profile women have spoken about their experiences including Michelle Obama, Sheryl Sandberg and Maya Angelou:

"I have written eleven books, but each time I think, 'Uh-oh, they're going to find out now. I've run a game on everybody, and they're going to find me out.'" — Maya Angelou

The result of experiencing the imposter phenomenon is that you might push constantly to achieve, have anxiety, not go for opportunities or experience stress and anxiety.

We are shaped by our experiences, but we do not need to be defined by the negative ones.

Here are some tips to manage self-doubt and imposter syndrome:

1) Hear her out – there is a reason that these thoughts have appeared and ignoring them doesn't make them go away. Most negative thoughts come from the past so let's leave it there. Listen - but know the statements are not true.

2) Turn a negative into a positive – how you talk to yourself is just as important as how others talk to you. What would you say to a friend who said negative things about herself?

3) Question the belief – not good enough compared to who? Who says you shouldn't be 'here'?

4) Believe in yourself – you've spent time getting skills and have knowledge that people want. Believe in yourself – others already do!

5) Find your cheerleaders - find people that will uplift you and support you.

However, sometimes you need to get professional help to deal with these issues – ask for help, it's a form of strength.

FEAR

What is fear?

Fear is important to us as human beings as it keeps us safe, however, what we have developed is a fear response in situations that are not dangerous to us, for example, public speaking. We worry about how others see us and judgements that they make about us and these stop us using our voice and doing something that we are passionate about. Fear can then impact your decision-making and behaviours and if it is overwhelming and dominating your day-to-day life it is important to seek professional help.

However, if it is a block that comes up and you want to overcome it here is an exercise that will help you.

Exercise

Do you know what you are afraid of?

- Are you afraid of failing?
- Are you afraid of success?
- Are you afraid of judgement?
- ???

It is useful for you to explore what your fears may be.

Find some quiet time to work on your fears.

Try to understand what you are afraid of and work with your worries. Get a piece of paper and write out things that you are afraid of and then go through the questions:

Part one

Firstly, are they real or imagined?

Now consider

- “What if...?” What’s the worst-case scenario of your fear?
- Would it be so bad? Can you handle it?

Tackling the issues

- What is the consequence of this fear?
- What is the benefit of tackling this fear?

Taking action

- What can you do to mitigate them?
- Can *you* do something about this particular issue?
- Who can help you solve these problems?
- Is it time to just let go?

Now put the paper away and come back to it in a few days.

Part two

Take out the paper and re-read what you wrote then answer the following questions:

- Do you feel the same way about them?
- Can you think of new solutions?
- Again, who can help you solve these problems?

Remember:

- Asking for help is a strength, not a weakness!
- See the fears as challenges and seek solutions
- Turn the negative energy into something positive



MANAGING OVERWHELM - FIVE STEP ACTION PLAN

If your to-do list is overflowing, your diary is so jam-packed you have to schedule calls with your friends and you forgot the last time you had five minutes to yourself it's time to take control of your life and here is a plan to help you:

Acknowledge you are overwhelmed

Sounds simple, doesn't it? But you may find that being overwhelmed has become your 'norm' and you *expect* to constantly feel stressed and overburdened. Some stress and pressure can be positive. However constant high levels of stress can be damaging to your health and wellbeing.

Stop and take stock *

If it all seems too much just stop. Sounds drastic but you may need 12, 24 or 48 hours to clear your mind and address what activities are leaving you drained. Stepping away from the activities gives you space to think.



Take charge

Once you have a clearer understanding of what issues/activities are causing the problems you can formulate your plan of action. Pick three things that would make the most difference in your life if you changed them. Some things may be easier to solve than others. You may have to learn to accept what you cannot change or just let them be.

Get help

Asking for help is a sign of strength, not a weakness. You cannot manage everything by yourself and you should not have to. Do you need direct support for specific tasks? E.g. childcare, accounts or cleaning. Ask contacts for recommendations and get the support in place. Or if you need support with direction or learning key skills consider a coach/mentor. Don't forget family and friends – they may not realise you could do with a hand and that help is often free!

Celebrate!

You have taken the time to deal with your issues and these are important to your business, life, health and wellbeing. Whether it is a small step or a major milestone

you should acknowledge your achievements. Your reward is your choice. It could be something as simple as putting your feet up with a cup of tea and a magazine or going on a spending spree. You have chosen to take control and make change happen so reward yourself for your courage!



* Photo by [Will Porada](#) on [Unsplash](#)

STAYING MOTIVATED

- Revisit your vision and goals and remember why you are doing what you are doing. Think about whether the vision is still the one that you want to pursue. Are you still excited about it? If not, change it! If you are, that's great.
- Create a vision board:
Use a vision board as a point of focus. Vision boards are powerful and help keep you motivated.
 - Using the results of your five-year plan meditation, start pulling together lots of images, words and/phrases from magazines and newspapers or online.
- Get a piece of A2 or A3 paper and paste away!
- Display it somewhere you will be inspired by it every day.
- Only add the things you want to realise/achieve.
- Create some positive affirmations to get through the dip.
- Reward yourself for each step of the journey not just for major milestones.