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Feeling Overwhelmed? Engage Your Inner Warrior Goddess

By Christine Thomas

One of the side effects of our rich, abundant 21st century lives seems to be frequent bouts of feeling overwhelmed. You know the symptoms: inability to focus on any one thing because there are just way too many things that needed your attention yesterday; disconnection between your words and your thoughts, probably because your mind won't let you complete any one thought before rushing off to remember something else urgent that you've forgotten; exhaustion so severe you can barely stay awake on the road or the computer or the phone, while at the same time you are unable to sleep soundly through the night as, again, you keep remembering so much of what you have forgotten (but if you get up to write it down you will again forget that urgent piece of flotsam before you find pen and paper); complete distortion of time so that you actually think it will only take a few hours to move into a new home or a few minutes to write that chapter; inability to complete any task because every task is so huge and depends on 50 other things being completed first....

You can add your favorite symptom to this list.

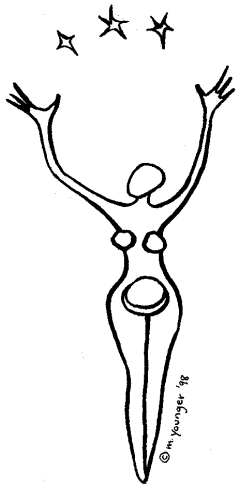
In those moments of panic and desperation in the face of unending need, call on your own inner warrior goddess for help. Inside each of us there is a reservoir of clarity and strength, a warrior goddess who will fiercely protect what is true and tender for us. And though it may seem like constant busyness is just an irritating but necessary part of our daily lives, in truth it is much more than that. Continual motion and endless doing erode our creative drive, our health and our personal power. They distort our inner compass, sending us spinning and swirling, unanchored to face the world without our own reference points. We need nothing less than a warrior goddess to remind us of what is really important, to reconnect us with our wisdom and truth.

“Warrior Goddess, Warrior Goddess, come to me. I need your wisdom for this age.” As Lisa Thiel reminds us in her song, we very much need the wisdom of a warrior goddess in this age. It's a good thing our warrior goddess is close to our hearts and ready to help us.

To find her, simply slow down, get quiet, go within. She resides in your heart, and your gut, in your blood and your bones, not your head. Call to this warrior goddess within you. Spend some time feeling her,

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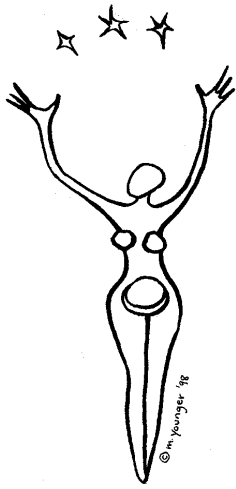
connecting with her, remembering her. You may want to ask her what for you is true and tender and needs her protection in the midst of all your busyness. She may share with you ways to get out of your overwhelming whirlwind or tell you how to use her strength to create the life you want. Know that you can connect with her whenever you need to. Her wisdom, your wisdom, is what's best for you. Here are some of the ways I have learned from my warrior goddess to get out of overwhelm and back into myself:

Either go up or go down

Either get solidly grounded or soar above it all. Remember, being overwhelmed indicates we are swirling around, completely ungrounded or unconnected to what has deep meaning for us. One way we can reconnect with our truth, our meaning, is by sending our roots down deep into *Pachamama*, Mother Earth. You can visualize yourself like a tree, sending your taproot deep down into the solidness of the earth while standing spine straight, solidly connected to the web of life. Breathe and rest for a moment here. From this place of connection to Earth and Spirit, to the ancestors and the future descendents, and to your life purpose, as a warrior goddess, you can look at the many tasks before you and see them for what they really are.

You could also get this connected view from soaring above, like an eagle, looking down and seeing all the demands on you as part of the ebb and flow of your life, as part of your role within the unifying web of all life. From this high view, notice the importance or insignificance of all these things you absolutely must do. As you soar like an eagle you can use your clear, far vision to help you put your current challenges in a different perspective.

Once you locate yourself and the tasks before you within the web of life and see the connection to the Work you are here to do, then gather your energy. A warrior goddess, like a sorceress, is one who can “source” energy that is then available for her use. You will need all kinds of energy to meet your challenges. Since huge tasks require lots of energy, you have to keep gathering that energy from somewhere. Use whatever techniques work for you to gather your energy. Sleep is a good place to start. All those things that keep your body healthy and strong are good, like drinking water, eating well, and exercising. Meditation, yoga asanas and breathing, connecting with Spirit through prayer or journey, dancing, singing, or drawing up energy from the Earth are all ways to source energy. One of my favorite ways of sourcing energy is doing what I call “belly on the ground meditation.” In this simple meditation, I lie stomach down on the ground in my garden, clear my mind, connect my belly with the Earth, feel my roots intertwine with the plants all around me, and draw up the wisdom of



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the Earth and Green Ones. Your inner goddess can suggest the ways that are best for you. Excessive amounts of caffeine or junk food may give you short bursts of energy but they won't sustain you in the long run and they usually lead to even more ungrounded swirling around. Drink up power from those clear springs that nourish your core.

Look at the illusion with your strong eye, with your inner wisdom

Most of what we think we just have to be doing originates as messages from monkey mind. You know monkey mind – the place of an endless stream of confusing thoughts that lead nowhere, most of which are generated by that insatiable inner critic. Our thinking minds also get confused between what is a garden hose and what is a snake.

Everything becomes urgent, terribly important and unable to be dealt with by anyone but us right now. And our monkey minds create all kinds of illusions to keep us from some hard truths. Sometimes we run faster and faster on the treadmill as a replacement for looking deeper. Check to see what you may be avoiding by staying busy. Let your warrior goddess help you see with your third eye, your strong eye, through the illusions. Call on her to help you see the truth about the importance or urgency of the tasks before you. Let her help you decide if these tasks are yours to do, to delegate, or to dump.

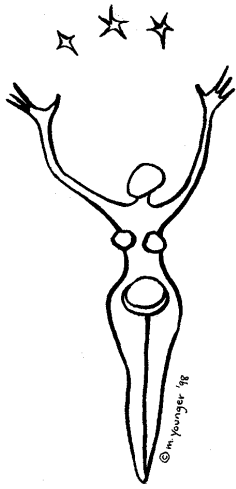
One thing my warrior goddess, who comes to me in the form of a wise turtle, told me was that my feelings of being overwhelmed originate from my greediness. I am breathless with busyness because I keep wanting more – more experiences, more control, more money, more respect, more beautiful things, more knowledge, more health, more, more, more. She told me to “find the all in the one rather than gobbling all to find the one.” I see that my desire for more, even if it is for more of what is very good, leads me into too much, the kind of too much that can be overwhelming. It is humbling to realize that I do this to myself; after all, most of my choices are based on desire. The realization that I'm being greedy sends me back to gratitude and joy and reminds me to savor each moment. When my internal reference shifts, I realize that I'm not running on a wheel but dancing through a meadow.

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Remember that every “Yes” comes with a built in “No”

My job is to decide who or what gets the “no.” Consider this: every time we say yes to something, that means we are also saying no something else. If I agree to help you paint your kitchen, whatever else I could have used that time for I am now saying no to. When I decide



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to answer email at 11 PM I say no to a bath or reading or sleep. We usually don't want to let go of things so we just keep taking more on, saying yes to more and more. In reality we are saying no just as much as we are saying yes, but we usually don't see the full impact of the no's as easily.

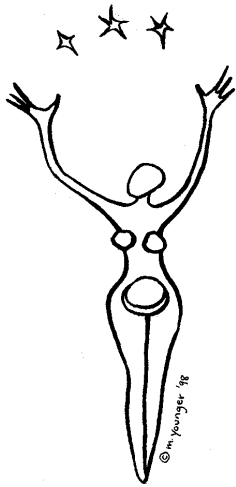
Determine what you desire

Ever notice how we can work really hard, completely involved in a project without the energetic stress that feels overwhelming when we are engaged with something we really love? My warrior goddess reminds me to keep figuring out what I want. Far from being selfish or unloving, getting clear about what I want keeps me responsible for meeting my own needs and not depending on others to take care of me. Often when I get grounded and connected with my inner goddess and then look at what is making me overwhelmed, I see that I am giving up what I desire, so much so that I often don't even know what I want. So I swirl around gobbling up all kinds of things, experiences, or accomplishments that are only surface desires, not necessarily what I really want. I have censored my deep desires before I have let them even surface in my conscious mind because I think I just can't have them. "Whoa," my critic says, "If all you do is what you want you'll just lie around, being selfish, losing your family and friends, becoming bankrupt and homeless. It is hateful and dangerous to be motivated by desire." But my warrior goddess says, "Not true. You came here with the desire to live your dreams, to do your Work, to give and receive, to contribute your part to the beauty of creation. What you want and what you love can point you in the direction of your purpose. Don't settle for the superficial. Stay connected to your deep desires and your big dreams."

Often we do things we don't necessarily want to do in service of something we really do want. I may not want to cook dinner tonight but I do want to feed myself and my family nourishing food. I don't really want to write that letter to editor but I do want to support a cause I believe in. You know the things you do that you would rather not, but you do them because you are committed to the bigger picture they paint. That is good. My warrior goddess reminds me to make sure, though, that I'm grounded and not swirling, that I can easily backtrack from what I am doing to what I really want in a few steps. Otherwise I may be taking a longer route than I need to on the path of my life's purpose.

Ask for the help you need

Remember the view that includes you in the vast interconnected web of life means that you are not alone. From spirit allies or physical ones,



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help is all around. Going it alone is an ego-based illusion. Something is emerging into the world through each of us and our actions, and we are never alone. Be willing to let go of some sense of control in order to open your heart and your hands to receive the support available to you. There are all kinds of other warrior goddesses out there that we all can learn from and draw on.

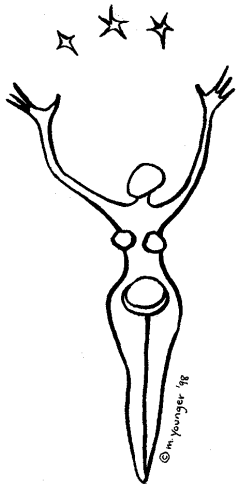
Use ritual to transform the energy into a usable form

Light candles, say a prayer, put on inspiring music or create a more formal ceremony to channel fear, frustration, anger, and unfocused passion into something that you can use. Sometimes we need powerful actions to help us shift out of habitual ways of being. Ritual that has meaning for us can be such a powerful tool for change. One morning several years ago I woke up and fumbled downstairs in a fog to let my dog out. I woke up already thinking about all the things I needed to do that day, about all the problems I had to solve and people I needed to work with. In my foggy, distracted state, I fell down the stairs and broke my leg. I heard the sickening sound of my bone breaking. As I lay at the bottom of the stairs I decided right then that I could find a better way to start my day! Now I wake up every morning and go immediately outside to give thanks and greet the spirits. I needed a powerful wake up call and a powerful ritual to shake me out of a bad habit.

Starting and ending each day in a ritual way can be an awesome anchor against the swirling disconnect of overwhelming situations. These “book ends” to the day help me, even if only momentarily, shift from all the doing into just being alive and grateful.

Recognize the need to escape

Many times when I feel overwhelmed, I am facing a task I just plain do not want to do. Sometimes my desire to be finished will pull me through to the other side, but then I find I need to counterbalance the energy I’m expending in sticking to this task that drains me. Delightful escape activities go a long way to counterbalancing all the effort I’ve expended. Day dreaming, mindless movies or games or books, sleeping in a hammock, or sitting by a stream are good ways to completely disengage. Anything that recharges my energy and my soul helps fill me back up so that I can once again continue with my WORK. Check with your inner goddess – she’ll play with you as often as you’ll let her. Mine reminds me of the value of dreaming – day dreams, night dreams, the dream I’m here to live are all absolutely necessary for my sanity. Their wisdom sustains me.



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De-clutter, clean up, create beauty

Recognize the need for clear spaces for energy to flow. Now this doesn't mean make the overwhelming task even larger. What it does mean is to simplify and clear off where you can. You don't need to keep the whole project on your desk for the duration. Only look at the piece you are working on at the moment. So if you have a multi-page to-do list, try to keep no more than three items in your line of vision. Seeing the whole enchilada at once is too much, and seeing the kitchen trashed from making endless pans of enchiladas will drive you crazy. Stash stuff out of sight if you need to, but find what calm you can in beauty and simplicity. Simplicity's gift is ease.

Ditch any desire for perfection

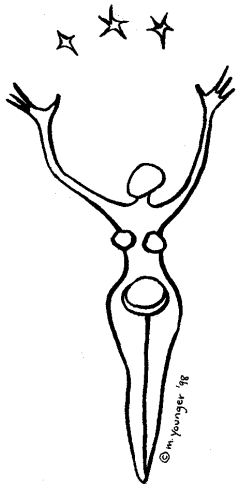
The desire to have things perfect makes any task overwhelming. Striving for perfection is the inner critic's way of reminding you, yet again, that you just can't do it well enough. Counter that idea with another perspective. My mother says there are a whole lot of jobs that are best done half-way. One of my yoga teachers suggested that for optimum results in yoga we would do best to apply C+ effort. Yes, this way is a far cry from "If it's worth doing at all, it's worth doing well," but I think the person who said that must have had full time help at home and at work. Warrior goddesses don't need to do things perfectly – they know that they are perfect just as they are.

Get clear about what part of this task is yours and what belongs to someone else

When we feel overwhelmed, we may forget our boundaries. We can, in confusion, expand ourselves too much. Take some time to own what is yours and give back what belongs to someone else. When in doubt, check with you-know-who. You have a vision for a harmonious, successful future, but it's not completely up to you to make in a reality.

Never underestimate the power of humor

Laughter is an automatic diffuser of all the rugged feelings being overwhelmed stirs up. We often use the Norman Cousins method of realignment – deep belly laughter. Try it. Watch nothing but comedies for several weeks. Don't watch the news or any dramas, only comedies. Ask everyone you meet what their favorite comedy is and see if you concur. Go to a comedy club or get your friends to tell you their favorite funny stories. A few weeks of regular deep belly laughs will go a long way to reducing the side effects of feeling overwhelmed. A laughing warrior goddess, you say? Absolutely! Joy is the ultimate



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secret weapon in the struggle with the often overwhelming demands of our lives.

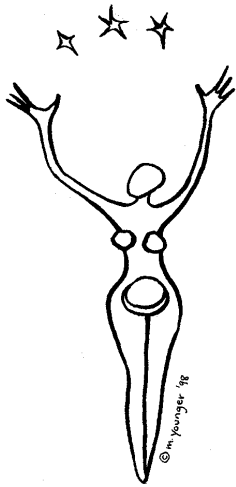
Let death be your ally

This is a powerful deflator of feeling overwhelmed. Our ego keeps telling us that no one can do this job but us, or that no one can do it as well as we can. The truth of the matter is that everyone is expendable. All of us will die without finishing everything on our to-do list. And even if we are deeply missed and mourned for eons, someone else will do what we thought we absolutely had to do, or it just won't get done. Death, and her sisters illness, accident, and bed-ridden burn-out, have a way of cutting our ego-based control issues down to size. So occasionally imagine what would happen if you just plain cannot finish this task. Start prioritizing from there.

Some of us have jobs or projects or creative endeavors that we believe in completely and are deeply committed to completing. We are moved to give all we can to what we know to be our Work. What if we are overwhelmed by unending need that we wholeheartedly desire to meet? Again, connect with your inner warrior goddess and return to knowing your treasured place in the interconnected web. We are not alone. No challenge is ever faced alone. Call on a prayer circle in Georgia to help you with your work in the inner city. Ask your ancestors, who faced incredible challenges, to remind you of how they did the really hard things. Call on the trees to lend you their strength. Keep stepping outside of your linear, dualistic way of thinking. Keep letting go of the need to control. Give from your heart as much as you lovingly want to and then trust the wisdom of the Goddess.

Recognize the power of the void

Sometimes we lose all control and drown in feeling overwhelmed. These are the times when our desire to manage everything sends us headlong into the void. In the Wise Woman tradition we recognize the power of the void, the great mystery from which all is born. In this place of chaos, of all potentialities, of "the great nothing dark womb of the goddess," as Susun Weed describes it, anything but control is possible. Not to worry – this is the blessed place of healing. This is the place of shut down, break down, going down, down and deep, into the dark unknown. Sometimes the only way through the illusion of control is to surrender to the chaos of the void. Courageous are the embodied warrior goddesses who let the great unknown engulf them. This is not defeat. Rather, the void is the source of all possibilities. From this place entirely new approaches to challenges are possible. New life, new beginnings, new ways of living, new growth all come out of the dark



chaotic void. Like the Goddess Innana we can return from our descent more whole, more powerful, and more deeply aware of our truth.

These are some of the things my warrior goddess has taught me. See if any of them have meaning for you. Remember you can trust that source of wisdom and strength within yourself to find your own way through the hectic pace of life.

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