



Capacity – Finding Balance, Protecting Energy

How often do you feel like you're running on empty, stretched too thin by the endless demands of life? Do you notice the effects on your mental, emotional, and physical health? Do you push through regardless until you've got nothing left to give?

Recognising and honouring your capacity isn't just about avoiding burnout; it's about reclaiming your energy and focus for the things that matter most.



This worksheet will help you if you:

- Feel overwhelmed, like there's too much on your plate, or like time and energy are always in short supply.
- Want to understand why you take on too much and recognise the signs before it becomes overwhelming.
- Need practical steps to align your commitments with what truly matters, creating balance and space in your life.

Why This Happens – The Human Condition and Capacity

It's all too easy to fall into the habit of taking on too much, often without even realising it. One task leads to another, and before you know it, you're running on fumes. The reasons behind this behaviour are rarely simple—sometimes they're obvious, but often they're buried beneath layers of social conditioning, personal history, and even fear.

For many of us, it begins with the best of intentions. We want to help. We want to make things easier for others—our colleagues, our families, our friends. Taking on a little extra here and there seems harmless, even noble. You might think, *“It's just quicker if I do it myself,”* or, *“They're already so busy, I'll handle it.”* And for a while, this mindset works. Until it doesn't.

Then there's the societal narrative that tells us our value is measured by how much we produce, achieve, or sacrifice. Busyness becomes a badge of honour, a way to prove our worth in a culture that often equates productivity with success. We're praised for being reliable, selfless, and endlessly capable. But no one sees the toll it takes—on our minds, our bodies, and our relationships.

And sometimes, the pressure is deeply personal. Saying, “No” might stir up a pang of guilt, as if you're letting someone down. Asking for help can feel like admitting failure. You might even believe, consciously or not, that your worth is tied to how much you can give. Whether it's at work, with friends, or for your family, you've learned that being needed feels safer than being vulnerable.

Over time, this pattern becomes ingrained. The line between what you can do and what you should do blurs. You take on more and more, stretching your capacity until there's nothing left to stretch. And the cost? Resentment. Frustration. Exhaustion. The joy you once found in helping others is replaced by a quiet dread, as your own needs are consistently pushed to the side.

Practical Steps to Increase your capacity

Recognising The Signs

Before you can increase your capacity, it's essential to understand why you keep stretching yourself beyond your limits. Take a moment to reflect on what's motivating you. Is it one of the following, or something else entirely? Expand if you wish to.

Alternatively, you can skip to the shorter version of this – F.A.I.R model further down.

	YES	NO
Fear of Rejection or Conflict: Are you worried that saying “no” will upset others or damage relationships?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Desire for Validation: Do you feel that your worth is tied to how much you achieve or how much you help others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoidance of Vulnerability: Is it easier to focus on doing more for others than to face your own needs or feelings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Belief in Self-Sufficiency: Do you think you should handle everything on your own because asking for help feels like weakness?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cultural or Family Conditioning: Were you taught that being busy or self-sacrificing is a measure of success or goodness?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Control: Does taking on everything yourself give you a sense of security because you don't have to rely on anyone else?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fear of Letting Others Down: Do you feel a heavy sense of responsibility for keeping others happy or their lives running smoothly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unrealistic Expectations: Are you holding yourself to an impossible standard of perfection or productivity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Noticing reactions

Although it may be difficult at first, try recalling the sensations that come up for you when faced with the following scenarios. There's no right or wrong answer, this is simply an exercise to 'notice' your reactions, to bring forth greater awareness of your patterns and feelings. Pick the main area that you wish to concentrate on eg at work, at home or perhaps a particular person (eg spouse, parent, colleague, boss etc).

When someone asks you for help, what is your immediate reaction?

Physical Sensations: *Where do you feel this in your body? Is there a tightness, heaviness, or lightness?*

Emotions: *Do you feel obligated, excited, resentful, or uneasy?*

Thoughts: *What's the first thing that runs through your mind? "I should help," "I can't say no," "This is too much."*

Behaviours: *How do you typically respond? Do you agree immediately, hesitate, or try to avoid the situation?*

When you think about saying, “No” to a request, what comes up for you?

Physical Sensations: *Does your body feel tense, relaxed, or conflicted?*

Emotions: *Do you notice guilt, fear, relief, or pride?*

Thoughts: *What do you tell yourself? “They’ll be upset,” “I can’t handle this,” “It’s okay to set limits.”*

Behaviours: *How do you respond? Do you explain yourself, deflect, or stand firm?*

What happens when you feel overwhelmed by your responsibilities?

Physical Sensations: *Do you feel exhausted, restless, or disconnected?*

Emotions: *Are frustration, resentment, or sadness present?*

Thoughts: *What runs through your mind in these moments? "I can't cope," "Why is this all on me?" "I just need to keep going."*

Behaviours: *Do you withdraw, push through, or seek support?*

How do you react when someone offers to help you?

Physical Sensations: *Does your body relax, tighten, or feel uneasy?*

Emotions: *Do you feel grateful, defensive, awkward, or dismissive?*

Thoughts: *What do you think? “I don’t need help,” “I should do this myself,” “It’s nice to feel supported.”*

Behaviours: *Do you accept their help, deflect it, or take control of the task?*

Imagine letting go of one responsibility today—what would that feel like?

Physical Sensations: *Do you notice a sense of lightness, relief, or unease?*

Emotions: *Does the idea bring peace, discomfort, or freedom?*

Thoughts: *What do you tell yourself? “I can’t let this go,” “This feels amazing,” “I should have done this sooner.”*

Behaviours: *What actions might you take to make this happen?*

Well done for taking the time to reflect and explore your reactions!

Self-awareness is no small achievement—it’s the foundation for meaningful change. By noticing the patterns, thoughts, and emotions that shape your capacity, you’ve already taken the first step toward creating more balance and space in your life.

Remember, growth isn’t about perfection; it’s about progress. Each moment of reflection brings you closer to understanding yourself and honouring your needs.

Take a moment to appreciate the effort you’ve made so far - you’ve shown yourself the respect and care you deserve.

The FAIR Approach to Managing Capacity

When we feel overburdened or overwhelmed, it's often because our boundaries have been crossed or we've taken on too much without recognising it. The FAIR model offers a framework for reflecting on how to handle these situations constructively and regain control.

Feelings

Assess

Intentions

Resolve



Feelings

Who exactly is not showing you the appreciation you deserve?

Describe the main situation that is causing the issue. *Is it with colleagues, superiors, business partners, family members, or friends?*

What do you feel when you interact with this person?

Try to avoid 'they', focus instead on your internal experience - how YOU feel. *Frustrated, resentful, defensive, invisible, rejected, confused, hurt, disappointed?*

Assess

If you could watch a video recording of your interactions with this person, what do you notice about how you present yourself?

Notice your facial expressions, your body language, the tone of your voice. Is it aggressive, submissive, defensive, apathetic?

Intentions

How would you like to feel in the situation?

More confident, relaxed, calm, friendly, loving, humorous? What is the outcome you want to achieve?

Resolve

List 3 ways in which you can gain back more time and energy

Can you take breaks, set boundaries, practice more self-care?

What does a healthy dialogue look like?

What would the new recording look like with you being more self-assured, calm and in control? What would you be saying - note down some key phrases or a script.

What steps can you take to achieve the outcome you want?

Think of small, consistent steps or habit changes that can help you achieve your desired outcome.

Remember, you can't pour from an empty cup. By setting boundaries and expressing your needs assertively, you're not just helping yourself – you are showing others how to respect and value your energy.

Prioritising yourself is not selfish, it's essential for living a balanced, fulfilled life

FAIR in action – examples

Practical Example of FAIR in Action – At Home

<p>Scenario: You feel overwhelmed by the amount of housework and childcare you're managing while others in the household seem unaware of how much you're doing.</p>
<p>F – Feelings: You feel exhausted, unappreciated, and resentful. It seems like the weight of the household is on your shoulders, and no one notices or offers help.</p> <p>Reflection: <i>"I feel drained and frustrated because I'm constantly juggling housework and childcare with little acknowledgement. It's starting to affect my mood and patience."</i></p>
<p>A – Assess: You realise that you've taken on too much without asking for help or setting expectations. It's become an unspoken norm for you to handle everything, but this isn't sustainable.</p> <p>Reflection: <i>"I've fallen into the habit of saying, 'I'll just do it myself,' instead of asking for support. The others in the household probably don't even realise how much I'm doing."</i></p>
<p>I – Intentions: Your goal is to create a more balanced division of responsibilities so you can feel less overwhelmed and have time to recharge.</p> <p>Reflection: <i>"I intend to involve everyone in the household in maintaining the home. I want to make this about teamwork and fairness, not blame."</i></p>
<p>R – Resolve: You decide to hold a family meeting to discuss the current situation and how everyone can contribute. You come prepared with a list of chores and a suggested rotation. You also set boundaries for your downtime, making it clear that you need some time for yourself each week.</p>
<p>Plan of Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hold a calm discussion with everyone, explaining how you feel and why it's important to share responsibilities. - Suggest a fair distribution of tasks, taking into account everyone's schedules and abilities. - Set specific expectations, such as completing chores by a certain time or day. - Communicate your personal needs clearly: <i>"I need one evening a week where I can rest or do something for myself."</i>
<p>Example Dialogue: <i>"I've been feeling really tired and overwhelmed lately because I've been handling a lot of the housework and childcare on my own. I know everyone's busy, but I think it would be helpful if we all pitched in a bit more. Let's figure out how we can divide things so it's fair and manageable for everyone."</i></p>

Practical Example of FAIR in Action – At Work

Scenario: You’ve been consistently taking on extra work at your job, staying late, and sacrificing personal time to meet deadlines. While you want to be helpful and reliable, the growing workload has left you burnt out, with little energy for self-care or family.

F – Feelings

You feel frustrated, resentful, and undervalued. The constant pressure is draining your motivation and leaving you exhausted.

Reflection: “I feel frustrated and unappreciated because I’ve been working so hard, but no one seems to acknowledge how much I’m doing. I’m starting to dread work, and it’s affecting my energy levels and my time with family.”

A – Assess

You realise that you’ve been agreeing to every request for fear of disappointing your boss or being seen as unreliable. You haven’t voiced your concerns about the workload, assuming others understand how much you’re handling.

Reflection: “I’ve been agreeing to everything because I’m scared of looking uncooperative or incapable. But I’ve never actually told my boss how much I’m juggling. They probably don’t even know how overwhelmed I am.”

I – Intentions

Your goal is to maintain a good relationship with your boss while setting boundaries to protect your personal time and energy. You want to approach the situation constructively, focusing on solutions that benefit both you and the team.

Reflection: “I want to have an open conversation with my boss about my workload so we can prioritise tasks together. My aim isn’t to complain but to find a way to manage things more effectively without sacrificing my well-being.”

R – Resolve

You decide to schedule a meeting with your boss to discuss your workload and come prepared with a list of your tasks and a clear proposal for how responsibilities can be adjusted. You also block time in your calendar for self-care, committing to protecting this time going forward.

Plan of Action:

- Schedule a one-on-one meeting with your boss to discuss your workload.
- Prepare a list of all current tasks, including deadlines, to demonstrate your capacity limits.
- Propose solutions, such as prioritising high-impact tasks or delegating less critical ones.
- Set clear boundaries for your availability, such as leaving on time and protecting your weekends.

Example Dialogue:

“I’ve been taking on a lot of additional tasks recently, and I’m starting to feel stretched too thin. I want to make sure I’m delivering my best work, but I’m concerned that the current workload is making that difficult. Here’s a breakdown of what I’m managing right now—could we prioritise these tasks together or find a way to redistribute some of the workload? I want to ensure I’m meeting expectations while also maintaining balance.”

Closing Thoughts

Taking time to reflect on your feelings, assess your situation, and set clear intentions is a powerful step toward regaining balance and control in your life. Whether at home or at work, the FAIR approach helps you address challenges constructively, fostering healthier boundaries and more meaningful connections.

It's not about doing everything or pleasing everyone—it's about honouring your capacity and making choices that align with your well-being and values. Change doesn't happen overnight, but each small step brings you closer to a life that feels balanced, fulfilling, and authentically yours.

So, where are you noticing a need for change? What's one small action you'll take today to honour your capacity and create space for what truly matters?



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