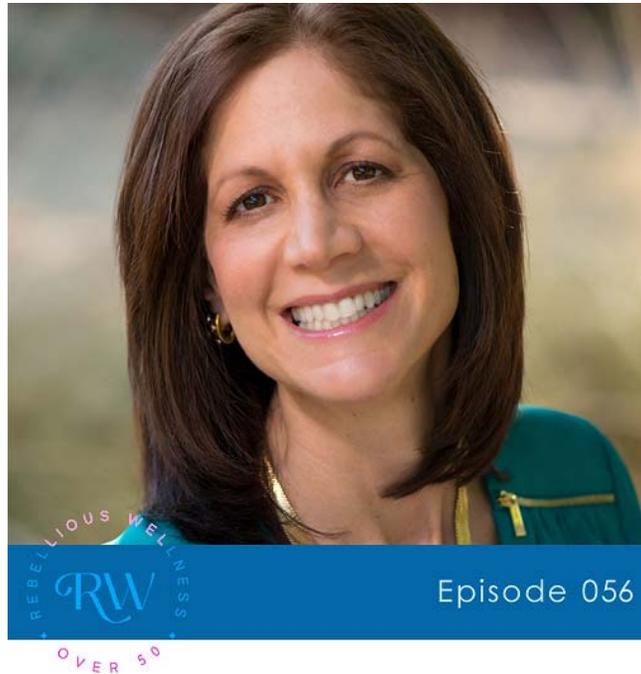


## Overwhelm is Sneaky — How to Break Free



### Episode 56: Overwhelm is Sneaky — How to Break Free with Phyllis Ginsberg

**Gregory Anne:** INTRO

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** I was humming along, cranking out like two child custody evaluations a month. And I had a full practice of kids and adults, everything that had to do with high conflict divorce, whether it was mediation, co-parenting you name it, whatever they had. I did. And I thrived in it.

People were asking, how are you getting so much done? Well, by 2005, I was like crash and burn just about ready to declare myself toast. I could do it for a while and I loved the work and I thought I was making this great difference in kids' lives. But I lost me in the process. I was overwhelmed with the amount that I said yes to. Plus I had a husband, two kids, a dog, and a cat. And I lost me.

So I had high stress. I was starting to feel the effects in my body, was disconnecting from friends, not exercising. And boy, did it take a toll on me.

**Gregory Anne:** Yeah. I'll bet. So you were a marriage and family therapist you are. You say on your website that you used your own strategies, techniques, to take yourself from that place of overwhelm to a much better place.

How did you discover those things if you were in overwhelm?

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** So I took a sabbatical, time off. I give myself space to just be for a year. And in the beginning I kept having these scenarios run through my mind of families that I worked with. And I was holding a lot of information. And so it took about six months to stop the chatter of my work in my brain.

I connected with nature. I planted a garden. I connected with friends. I went back to meditating and I'd go for walks. So I did some basic things. I did jigsaw puzzles. 'cause I knew my brain needed a break and I certainly I didn't know what I know today about the brain back then.

I wasn't brain research because I was so into the work I was doing that it didn't require that, but as I began to heal from the, I guess you'd call it traumatic amount of stress and overwhelm I put myself through, I discovered that it was little things that made a difference, little things that I was noticing like, wow, it makes me happy to feel sunshine on my face.

Just getting back in touch with me helped tremendously. Having some interests and passions come back to life like gardening and doing jigsaw puzzles that. Immersing myself back into things that I liked and enjoyed and connecting with other people, my family and friends, cooking, doing things that I put off because I was doing important work, but all that important work doesn't mean a thing if you can't function at the end of the day.

**Gregory Anne:** Yeah. Do you think that being in overwhelm and what you're describing I was seeing rote. You loved your work. We often love what we're doing. I think we get into the habits of busy, churning out work, client care, marketing, whatever it may be that we don't stop to smell the roses

so to speak, plant a garden and cook something delicious, which is when our brain can go into creative and enjoyment mode. Right? Imagination, flourishes when we're not so focused on work. Do you think that's a common thing that people just get into a habit of doing and they just keep doing?

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** I think not only is it a habit, it is ingrained in us at a really young age.

We are a society that is conditioned to produce. We don't find value in being, we find our value in doing, and then in being praised and reaching accolades and income. And yes, it was very flattering to have judges contact me. We know you can handle this case. We want you on the case and the attorney's saying, we'll wait for you.

Oh, it's eight months. Okay. No problem. I'm like, you gotta be kidding. It was insane. And towards the end, the cases I was taking on were not tame cases. They took a lot of time and effort and yes, I thoroughly enjoyed it, but. Jeez, you know, there's only one of me and there wasn't enough to go around.

And I think it's an easy trap for us to get into. Yes. Maybe you're earning more money or you're getting praised or you're getting referrals and it's enticing and tempting and all the goodies that light up our brain, the right?

**Gregory Anne:** The dopamine hit.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** Exactly. And we forget about the simplicity of life of just being, and smelling the roses.

**Gregory Anne:** You and I had a conversation before today, and you talk about recreation. It sounded like you were recreating you in your life. Not that you recreated who you are, but you brought more of you into it. And that was a recreation of how you did your life. Talk about recreation.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** So patterns get established at a really early age. This we know from research that we can have something happen, we have an experience and then we make meaning of it. And that's what gets stored in the subconscious. And then you'll find that there's these recreations. So, what tends to happen is you attract the same kind of friends.

Maybe you have a, what you could call a streak of bad luck with jobs. You wonder why you can't attract a mate. These are all patterns that get recreated to play out. What generally are wounds from the past, like these childhood experiences that they become ways that we coped in the beginning, they work for survival, but as we grow older or it may not be until your forties, fifties, even into your sixties that you realize, wow, I've been recreating the same pattern.

And that coping skill doesn't work and the meaning I made from whatever event and none of this is conscious. So like most of us don't know what we don't know.

All we know is life's a struggle and it's stressful and I'm overwhelmed and nothing seems to be working in this area of my life. Maybe I'm good here in work, but my personal life or my relationships are a mess.

**Gregory Anne:** So I was thinking of recreation in a different way. I was thinking that you recreated how you want it to be in your life. You're referring to the patterns, the circumstances we keep recreating because they're ingrained in us. So different kinds of recreation. I just wanted to make that distinction.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** Okay. And I will speak to that because that's the flip side.

That is the piece of looking at, this isn't working for me. I don't like the direction of my life or this one area of mine. And it is important to look at recreating yourself and playing with the idea of recreating a new identity. And I work with a lot of people who have gone through cancer and treatment.

And what often happens is they get this new identity. As a cancer patient, they go through their chemo, they ring the bell and now it's like, oh, now I'm a cancer survivor. So we put these labels on ourselves, we've got an identity and I'm all about, let's remove the labels, but let's find an identity

that's more to either the authentic you or the you that you would like. The you say because of our early childhood programming, you might have an identity that, part of it is, it's selfish to take care of myself, or I feel guilty when I take time away from my family or my job to do whatever might actually sustain you, whether it's meditation or exercise,

eating, you know, spending 20 minutes to sit and eat a leisurely meal. And you know, most of us we're fast paced. We've got things to do, places to go, people to see, but if you could recreate your identity, your personality, how you function, it takes a lot of awareness and it takes the foresight to be able to look and say, Hmm, how do I want to show up?

**Gregory Anne:** And on the flip side of showing up is how do I want to experience my life? Right. How we show up directly influences what we're going to experience, I would go into feel. I love your distinction between label labels versus identity. And I think we're going to talk about health in a minute.

Health labels, cancer, survivor cancer victim, pre-diabetic, diabetic it can put people in a negative space. There's no room for possibility. Except within that label as a diabetic. Rather than, I'm on my way to being a healthier person right now, I have something that's not healthy in me.

I love to help people, you probably do too, change the narrative, the way they tell that story about that label. And as you say, removing the label, and identifying as something other than the label. So now that we have the recreation possibility, we can recreate, but you mentioned, personality.

Do you think somebody can change their personality?

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** Definitely. Yeah, it takes awareness. You have to catch yourself when you're back in old programming. It's default. For me, for example, I am playing with the early childhood programming I got and the meaning I made from these messages of it's not safe

to go big. It's not safe to upstage other people. You know, don't draw attention to yourself and I've got clients that, you know, it's not okay for you to boast or brag. I didn't get that one, but you can see where this is going. I'm writing my next book and it is about this early childhood programming and these messages.

So I'm playing with what's the opposite of those things and how can I grow into it's okay for me to express myself, it's okay for me to get my message out to people. I am making an important difference. So in order to do those things, and I have clarity on what I want. I may not know how to get there, but I can picture it.

I can begin to feel it and draw myself to being that person.

**Gregory Anne:** Some people listening will know Mike Dooley, he's in personal development. He always says, don't worry about the cursed hows. You just said, I may not know how I'm going to get there. That made so much sense to me.

We just know right now, this is what I'm going to try. And that will lead to something else and something will trigger or we'll meet somebody. So that's a very important thing to remember.

The point is that, is it early childhood conditioning. And definitely we'll keep some people from becoming their full expression of themselves.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** It's a huge, huge limitation.

And I have lived it my whole life until more recently when I've decided, okay, I am ready to expand into being somebody I've never been before. And I don't know what that's going to look like, and I don't know what it's going to feel like, but I can say I want that experience.

**Gregory Anne:** You talk about people having the life they desire.

This seems like a perfect segue . I've had clients and I've been at events with large groups of people. When you ask somebody what they really truly want, what's your heart desire. Many people don't know how to answer that. If you want to generalize away from the overwhelm and the stress what would be a desirable life for somebody that finds themselves right now in overwhelm?

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** It's interesting that a lot of the people that I work with and I'm hearing this more and more as they are getting to be 60, 65, 70 years old. I want to live my life before I die, because they don't feel like they'd been living whatever living means to them. It's so fascinating. To hear someone say I've been alive, but I've been dead inside or I don't feel like I've really lived.

I've certainly not lived to my potential. One woman's like, I've never felt loved. It's really deep. But it could be, I want to go experience some travel and that would be living. So it's very personal.

**Gregory Anne:** Yeah, absolutely.

I personally would like to just be able to eat ice cream anytime I want. So let's talk about, I'm coming from the health perspective here. What are the health ramifications of staying in overwhelm and letting that be okay. Some people will say, you know, it's stressful and I'm overwhelmed, but it's okay.

I'm doing it. But there are health consequences to that. Right?

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** Right. At some point it does catch up with most people The chronic overwhelm can feel natural and normal. I'm not saying it's natural and normal to be in chronic overwhelm or stress or pain. But a lot of people, they reach a threshold where they become desensitized.

So until you stop and sometimes this happens, you'll go on a vacation and you do something different. You slow down, you stop and you get sick, right? Like, oh finally, let go of all that you've been holding onto. And that's a real sign of the toll that you put your body in. The stress, the tension you've been holding that you're not even aware of.

And we know that over time, if you have enough stress and tension on anything like a rubber band, it's going to break, something's going to give.

**Gregory Anne:** And we know of course, cortisol is the stress hormone, and it is not only an inflammatory hormone it's a storage hormone and it helps women hold onto the weight that they don't like.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** Correct. So you, you can have weight gain and decreased immune system. The thing about stress and overwhelm is if you're in what's considered fight or flight, when you're in that kind of high stress chronically or frequently, you're like in emergency mode, your body goes on high alert because it feels like you are in danger and you don't have the resources then to take care of business the way you'd like to. You don't have access to creativity and the ability to think clearly to come from wisdom, intuition, because everything shuts down, including your digestion.

So the blood flow actually goes to your extremities so you can fight or flee. So you're not getting adequate amount of blood flow to your brain or your stomach. And therefore your memory is not going to be as good.

Think about when you're high stress, do you make great decisions or are you maybe more prone to mistakes accidents, forgetting things?

**Gregory Anne:** I once heard a brain doc say when emotion goes up, intelligence goes down

speaking of the brain, you wrote a book called The Brain Make Over I believe. Is this a simple process? Is it a long-term program?

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** My book has 52 weekly readings and it doesn't take a whole year. You don't have to do 52 different things, but I've written it so simple because when I wrote this, I was actually doing a blog and I would write like two paragraphs a day. That was my blog five days a week because I didn't like reading long things.

I didn't have time and none of the bandwidth. So each weekly reading is like two pages. Maybe it goes into a third page and it's got something to do. For example, the first weekly reading is called what's your happiest moment to the day? It's asking you to find three to five happiest moments that you can recall.

Either you can put it in a journal and you can text it to somebody and tell somebody at the end of the day, what are your three to five happiest moments? And what this does is it gets your brain shifting off of stress, fear, and overwhelm and all of that stuff that we get so caught up in. Now

your brain is scanning your environment, looking to figure out what makes me happy. And it could be as simple as that first sip of hot tea in the morning. Seeing the roses bloom, the blossoms on the trees, hearing your favorite song. Simple. And if you were to do this daily for a week, a month or a year, it will change.

It's like a pattern interrupt in your brain. You cannot be super stressed and happy at the same time.

**Gregory Anne:** Right. Can't be in two states at the same time. Tony Robbins, I think was the first person I heard talk about state changes, a state of anxiety, frustration at the desk can't write,

cursor's blinking, get up. That's already a state change. Now you may need a little bit more, but just the act of physically moving or clapping your hands, anything to break the state. And so what you're saying is over time changing the natural inclination.

We have so many negative thoughts compared to positive thoughts every day. It's in the thousands times more.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** Yes. It's maybe about 80% are negative and that's just because we're born with these survival brains, but the survival brain is stressing us out today. Very few of us are in danger. I would venture to say probably 99.9% of us are not in danger when we open our email and we have a stress response, but our body feels it.

And if we don't reprogram the brain lay down some new neural pathways for a different way of thinking we will go back to what's familiar.

**Gregory Anne:** Yeah, it reminds me of when we had, I'm going to really date myself now. It's putting records on record players and it would skip because there was a nick, or the groove had gotten so worn.

It couldn't skip to the next one. Same with the brain, the tracks that we laid down, if we just keep replaying them over and over again, we have to consciously make the effort to create a new neural pathway out of that rut. And like you said, they can be simple things. It doesn't have to be complicated and it doesn't have to take a long time.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** And my book is a perfect example. You could find three or four things. Experiment, try them on for a week. That's what's recommended is try each one for a week. Move on to the next, if something resonates with you, stick with it for awhile. If it doesn't, you got 52 things to choose from.

**Gregory Anne:** Now you wrote another book something about food.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** It's called Tired and Hungry No More. And it is a lifestyle book. It has 50 healthy recipes, but you could be tired of a situation and hungry for

something new and different and exciting or calming. It's got the mental, emotional piece plus the lifestyle, because if you don't get that mental, emotional going and address that first

that's why most of us cannot for the life of us stick to a lifestyle change.

**Gregory Anne:** There are tons and tons and tons of books on how to stick with a new change in your life. And I have my favorites, but I'm going to ask you what yours is.

When you say the mental emotional piece. Give me an example of some way to help somebody have a change stick.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** I like to go for things that are going to be permanent changes. I don't know. I'm just about lasting change. Or I'm working with somebody who is ready to hear and adopt a mantra, like all is well, all is well in this moment. At this moment, I have everything I need. For some people who are super stressed, anxious having panic attacks and anxiety.

They may not believe that. And then I will introduce EFT tapping. If you don't address the actual root cause then you're only dealing with symptoms and I prefer not dealing with symptoms because that's kind of like putting a bandaid on it. And then at some point it's going to show up again.

**Gregory Anne:** Some people may not know what EFT is. Explain it.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** Yes. So it's called the emotional freedom technique. It's tapping on Meridian points on your face and body. And it's a great way to release stored emotions to reprogram a brain, but probably its most known for calming the amygdala, that part of the brain that signals the fight or flight response.

And so that is a tool that I teach people and I use when we need to really shift things on a deep level .

**Gregory Anne:** And it's non-invasive, it doesn't cost anything. To learn it might involve some costs, but once you learn it, you got it forever.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** Right. And both of my books have tapping in them and tapping scripts and instructions how to use it.

I've got a video on my website.

**Gregory Anne:** I think people underestimate the power in something so simple. But tapping on the Meridians those are the energy points, the points where the energy ends or resides in the head, the face, shoulders, arms, the rest of the body.

I've had a personal experience about, I know many people who are tappers and I used to be a speaker. If I was lucky enough to also be sharing the stage with somebody who was an EFT person they often offered something cause I would get pretty nervous and I'll tell you it worked like a charm.

And so if you're interested, I would say go to [PhyllisGinsburg.com](http://PhyllisGinsburg.com) and see what she's got there for you, because it is really a powerful thing. Once you have it, keep it in your pocket, you bring it out whenever you need it.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** And a great thing about this modality is. In the realm of energy healing, once you free stored energy is gone forever.

You will not get those same problems back because you freed these stored emotions. You freed the energy that goes with thoughts of trauma or anything that needs releasing. So it's real. It's powerful.

**Gregory Anne:** Yeah. And my listeners interested in the woo side of life, but haven't really gone there yet. Start with something simple, get to know, tapping something like that.

And it's, it's a way in, right? To understand energy healing a little bit better. So what would you leave us with Phyllis about the importance of getting out of overwhelm?

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** I would say don't wait until the house is on fire. If you know that you're a little bit on the edgy side, if you feel irritable, stressed, tense you've got some minor or maybe major aches and pains. You've got fears, doubts, worries. Those are all signs that you might be in overwhelm. And it would do you a wealth of good. It's like an ounce of cure is what's a pound of care.

An ounce of prevention

**Gregory Anne:** is worth a pound of cure.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** That's it. Yes. Prevention, anytime that you can prevent something from getting worse or prevent it from happening at all would be so worth it.

**Gregory Anne:** And you have a free guide Coping with Stress and Overwhelm on your website.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** Yes, I do.

**Gregory Anne:** And that harkens back to the beginning of the conversation, remember that if you don't stop to think, in the moments that you are overwhelmed, to say, oh, what am I doing?

Do I have to do this again? Ask yourself some good questions and break the cycle. Change your state around that, and then everybody may not be able to take a year's sabbatical, but certainly you can take 15 minutes, an hour a day, to decide what you want.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** Actually, my free gift on my website is called Cope with Stress and Overwhelm in Five Minutes or Less.

And it's got several things that you could choose from. You don't have to do them all. Just find one or two that, that work for you. And you can use them anytime that you need. That would be like your go-to things. Yeah. And I like that you give people choices. It's not like you have to do this, then this, then this right.

It's like pick one from column a and one from most of us, don't like to be told what to do and we're not a one size one, and we are not a one size fits all.

**Gregory Anne:** No, we're definitely not that. Well, Phyllis, this has been great. I really enjoyed it. I don't think of myself as a person who has overwhelm, but I can see how I get in ruts of doing.

A good reminder for me to step back and do I really want to be doing this right now? Is this helpful? Is this important? So thank you very much for being with us. People, [phyllisginsberg.com](http://phyllisginsberg.com) is where you can get the free download and learn about tapping, about her books, and all the other good stuff she has to offer.

Phyllis, thank you so much for being with us today.

**Phyllis Ginsberg:** Oh my pleasure. Thanks for having me.

**Gregory Anne:** You're welcome. I'll talk to you next week.

