

*A free guide for anyone whose mind
won't go quiet*

Beat Information Overload

*Quiet the noise. Steady your attention. Feel
like yourself again.*

BY MAYA ELLIS

35-PAGE WORKBOOK

A FREE GUIDE FROM BEAWAREOFME.COM

Beat Information Overload

Quiet the noise. Steady your attention. Feel like yourself again.

Written by Maya Ellis · First edition · 2026

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A quick, honest note before we start

This guide is educational, not medical advice. It's the plain-language version of what's helped me and what the research tends to point toward — not a treatment plan and not a substitute for care from a licensed professional. If your overwhelm feels constant or frightening, please talk to your doctor or a qualified clinician. There's a short list of support resources on the last page.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A note from Maya

A few years ago I had what I now politely call "a loud year." On paper, nothing was wrong. Underneath, my attention had quietly come apart. I'd open my laptop to do one thing and surface forty minutes later having done nine half-things and the original none. I read headlines I'd never remember. I checked my phone in the half-second between checking my phone.

What I eventually understood is that I wasn't lazy and my brain wasn't broken. It was *flooded*. There was simply more coming in than any nervous system was built to sort — and the constant sorting was costing me sleep, patience, and the ability to be anywhere fully.

I'm not a therapist or a doctor. I'm a writer who got tired of mental-health information that was either clinical and cold or vague and useless, so I started reading the actual research and translating it into things a person could do on a Tuesday. This guide is the short version of what's helped most — me, and the people who read beawareofme.com.

You don't have to do all of it. Pick one thing. Let it get a little quieter in here. Then turn the page.

— *Maya, Burlington, VT*



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How to use this

Read it once, lightly. Then come back to the worksheets near the end and actually fill them in. The doing is where the quiet comes from — reading about it is just the map.

INTRODUCTION

The 11:47 p.m. problem

It's late. You're tired. And somehow you're holding a glowing rectangle, three tabs deep into something you didn't choose and won't remember, while your actual life waits in the other room.

That's information overload, and almost everyone reading this has been there. It isn't a character flaw. It's the predictable result of pouring more input into a human nervous system than it was ever designed to hold.

Consider the math of an ordinary day. Messages from several apps. A news feed that refreshes faster than the news happens. Work that arrives as a steady drip of pings. Group chats. Recommendations. Updates about people you haven't seen since school. Each one is small. Together they form a kind of weather you live inside all day — and like weather, you stop noticing it even as it soaks you through.

The research community has a few names for what this does: continuous partial attention, decision fatigue, the cost of task-switching. The plain version is simpler. Your mind never gets to finish a thought, so it starts to feel like it can't think at all.

What this guide is — and what it isn't

This is not a plan to delete every app and move to a cabin. I like my phone. You probably like yours. The goal here isn't less technology for its own sake — it's **less noise, so there's room for the things you actually care about.**

It's also not a productivity system that turns you into a machine. Most overwhelm advice quietly assumes the problem is that you're not efficient enough. I think the opposite is usually true: you're trying to process too much, and the kind thing is to let less in — not to get faster at drowning.

When everything is asking for your attention, deciding what gets it is the whole game.

So what you'll find here is a small set of moves that tend to work, an honest week-long reset, and worksheets to make it real. Take what fits. Leave the rest. Quiet is built one decision at a time, and you can start with one.

One promise

Nothing in here requires special software, a subscription, or a personality transplant. Every move can be done with the phone and the life you already have.

01

PART ONE

What's actually going on

Before we fix anything, it helps to understand what overload really is — and why it's not your fault.

Two short chapters, then we start the reset.



Your attention isn't broken — it's flooded

Here's the part that helped me most, so I'll put it first: a mind that can't focus in a flood isn't a defective mind. It's a mind doing exactly what it's supposed to do.

Attention is a spotlight, not a floodlight. It's built to land on one thing at a time and hold it. What feels like multitasking is really fast switching — your spotlight darting between tasks, paying a small tax each time it moves. Researchers who study this find the tax is real: switching leaves a residue, so part of your head is still on the last thing when you start the next. Stack enough switches and you get that specific, frazzled exhaustion of having been busy all day with nothing to show for it.

The reason modern life feels so overloading is that so much of it is engineered to *trigger a switch*. A buzz, a badge, a red dot, a "someone tagged you." Each is a tiny tug on the spotlight. None is a crisis. All of them together are why you can't finish a paragraph.

Reframe

You don't have an attention problem. You have an **input problem**. Fix the inputs and a surprising amount of the "attention problem" quietly resolves itself.

What the overload quietly costs

Overload rarely shows up as a single dramatic problem. It shows up as a tax on everything, paid in small coins you don't notice leaving your pocket.

- **Sleep.** A mind that's been switching all day doesn't power down on command. Late scrolling keeps it switching right up to the pillow, which is part of why so many of us lie there wide awake and wired.
- **Mood.** A steady drip of alarming, comparing, urgent input keeps your stress system gently switched on. Over time that low hum can read as anxiety, irritability, or a flat sort of dread.
- **Presence.** The cruelest cost. You're with people you love and a part of you is somewhere else, half-waiting for the next buzz. The moment happens; you sort of miss it.
- **Memory.** You can't remember what you read because you never really finished reading it. Nothing got the depth it needed to stick.

Overload doesn't steal one big thing. It shaves a little off all of them.

The good news hiding inside all of this: because the cost is spread across so many small inputs, you don't need one heroic fix. You need a handful of small, repeatable decisions. That's the rest of this guide.

A GENTLE GUT-CHECK

Signs you might be carrying too much

None of these are diagnoses — they're just the patterns I see most. Tick the ones that feel familiar. No judgment; this is information, not a verdict.

- ☐ You reach for your phone in the gap before you've even decided to.
- ☐ You read constantly but couldn't say what you learned today.
- ☐ You feel "busy-tired" — drained without a clear, finished thing to point to.
- ☐ You start tasks and abandon them mid-way, then forget you started.
- ☐ You lie down to sleep and your mind starts replaying tabs.
- ☐ You feel a low background urgency that doesn't trace to any real emergency.
- ☐ Silence feels slightly uncomfortable, so you fill it with a screen.
- ☐ You've stopped finishing books, shows, or thoughts.

If you ticked a few

Welcome to roughly everyone with a smartphone. This isn't a personal failing — it's a design you're swimming against. The next pages give you something to do about it.

WORKSHEET · WARM-UP

Where is your overload coming from?

You can't curate what you haven't named. For one ordinary day, notice where the noise actually enters. Don't change anything yet — just watch. Fill in a few rows below or on your own paper.

INPUT (APP, CHANNEL, HABIT)	WHEN IT PULLS ME	HOW I FEEL AFTER	KEEP / TRIM / CUT?
e.g. news app	first thing, in bed	tense, behind	trim

The only rule

Be honest about the "how I feel after" column. That feeling is the real data. We tend to keep the inputs that make us feel worst — they're usually the most compelling.



02

PART TWO

The reset

Six small moves. You don't need all of them. Each one, on its own, makes the day a little quieter. Stack two or three and you'll feel the difference within a week.

1

 THE RESET · MOVE ONE

Put your inputs on a diet

If overload is an input problem, the first move is the most obvious and the most ignored: **let less in.** Not nothing — less.

We treat information like it's automatically good, the way we once treated calories. More must be better; staying "informed" must be responsible. But just as a body does better on fewer, better meals than on constant grazing, a mind does better on fewer, better inputs than on an all-day buffet of half-things.

An information diet isn't about ignorance. It's about choosing your sources on purpose instead of letting algorithms and group chats choose for you. You'll end up *more* informed about the few things that matter and blissfully behind on the churn that never did.

Try this

Pick your two or three genuinely-trusted sources for the things you care about. Visit them on purpose, once a day. Then let the feeds that find you become feeds you have to go find. The friction is the feature.

How to curate without missing your life

People resist this because they're afraid of missing something important. In practice, the important things have a way of reaching you. Here's a starting framework:

- **Choose pull over push.** Push (notifications, feeds) arrives whether you want it or not. Pull (a site you visit, a newsletter you open) waits for you. Shift as much as you can from push to pull.
- **Pick a "once a day" window.** Batch the catching-up into one calm slot instead of forty anxious check-ins. The news will keep.
- **Unfollow without guilt.** Following someone isn't a relationship. Muting a feed isn't an insult. You're allowed to curate your own head.
- **Mind the "just in case" inputs.** Most of what we consume "to stay informed" is neither actionable nor memorable. If you can't say what you'd do differently with it, it's noise wearing a serious coat.

You are allowed to be a little behind on the world. The world will cope.

Do this for a week and notice the strange spaciousness that opens up. That space was always yours. It was just rented out.

2 THE RESET · MOVE TWO

The notification detox

If you do only one thing in this whole guide, do this. Notifications are the single biggest, most fixable source of the tug-on-the-spotlight problem — and almost all of them are off by default for a reason you forgot.

Most apps ask for permission to interrupt you because interruption is how they keep you. That's not a conspiracy; it's just the business model. The fix is to flip the question. Instead of "should I turn this off?", ask: **"has this ever told me something I genuinely needed to know the second it happened?"** For the overwhelming majority of apps, the honest answer is no.

So we go through them, once, on purpose, and turn the buzzing down to the handful that have earned it. It takes about ten minutes and it's the closest thing to a quick win this guide offers.

The standard to use

An app gets to interrupt you only if a real human is trying to reach a real you, right now. Calls, texts, and direct messages from actual people — maybe. Everything else can wait until you choose to look.

A simple rule for every app

Run down your phone's notification settings with this. When in doubt, off. You can always turn one back on; you'll almost never want to.

This kind of app	What to do with its notifications
Calls, texts, direct messages from people	Keep — but consider silencing group threads that aren't urgent.
Social media	Off. All of it. Likes and tags are not time-sensitive.
News & "breaking" alerts	Off. You'll check the news on your terms, in your window.
Shopping, games, "we miss you" apps	Off. These exist purely to pull you back in.
Email	Off the badge and sound. Check it in batches, not in real time.
Calendar & reminders you set yourself	Keep. You chose these; they serve you.

Bonus move

Turn your screen to grayscale for a few days (most phones hide this in accessibility settings). Color is part of what makes the buffet so appetizing. In black and white, the pull weakens noticeably.

3 THE RESET · MOVE THREE

One thing at a time

Multitasking feels productive and mostly isn't. Since the switching tax is the engine of overload, the antidote is almost comically simple: do one thing, finish it (or stop on purpose), then do the next.

The way to make that possible is a **focus block** — a short, protected stretch where you do a single thing and let everything else wait. Not all day. Just a window.

- **Start with 25 minutes.** Short enough that your brain agrees to it, long enough to actually land on something.
- **One task, named out loud.** "I'm writing the email." Not "I'm doing work." Vague tasks invite switching.
- **Phone in another room.** Not face-down on the desk — in another room. Out of sight genuinely lowers the pull.
- **When the urge to switch comes, notice it and stay.** The urge passes in seconds if you don't feed it. That noticing *is* the skill.

Why it works

Every block you finish without switching teaches your nervous system that the buzzing can wait — and that you can, in fact, still pay attention. That confidence is half the recovery.

4 THE RESET · MOVE FOUR

The 20-minute digital declutter

A crowded screen is a crowded mind. This is a one-time reset you can do today; set a timer for twenty minutes and stop when it rings, even if you're not done. Done-ish beats perfect.

- ☐ Delete five apps you haven't opened in a month. You won't miss them.
- ☐ Move every social and news app off your home screen into a folder, a swipe away.
- ☐ Make your home screen boring on purpose — tools, not temptations.
- ☐ Turn on grayscale or a "wind-down" mode for the evening hours.
- ☐ Unsubscribe from three email lists right now, the instant you next see them.
- ☐ Set one app you over-use to log you out each time, so opening it takes a choice.
- ☐ Clear the badges. Those little red numbers are tiny anxiety machines.

The point

You're adding a half-second of friction between you and the things that pull hardest. That half-second is often the whole difference between a reach and a choice.

5

 THE RESET · MOVE FIVE

Ground the spin

Sometimes the overload has already happened and your mind is racing — tabs replaying, thoughts looping, that wired-but-tired hum. You can't curate your way out of *that* in the moment. You need to come back into your body for a minute.

The practice I reach for most is the **5-4-3-2-1**. It's a grounding technique that works by giving your attention something simple and physical to hold, which gently interrupts the spin. It's not magic and it won't solve the underlying load — but it can take the edge off enough to think.

5 · 4 · 3 · 2 · 1 — slowly, with real attention

5 things you can see · 4 things you can feel · 3 things you can hear · 2 things you can smell · 1 thing you can taste. Name each one to yourself. Don't rush it.

That's it. The slowness is the medicine. You're not trying to feel amazing — you're just trying to land back in the room, where the actual emergency almost never is.

A fuller walk-through lives in the grounding guide on beawareofme.com, if this one helps and you want more.

6 THE RESET · MOVE SIX

Build a wind-down that protects sleep

The day's overload comes for your sleep last and worst. A mind still switching at midnight won't settle just because you've turned off the light. So we give it an off-ramp — a short, repeatable wind-down that signals the day is closing.

- **Pick a "screens down" time** and make it slightly earlier than feels comfortable. The last hour is where the worst scrolling lives.
- **Park tomorrow on paper.** Write down the loops in your head — the to-dos, the worries. On the page, they stop circling. You're telling your mind it's safe to stop holding them.
- **Do the same three small things each night** in the same order. Repetition is what turns a routine into a signal your body trusts.
- **Keep the phone out of the bedroom** if you possibly can. Buy the cheap alarm clock. It's one of the highest-return ten dollars you'll ever spend.

If your mind races at 3 a.m.

That specific wide-awake-and-wired feeling is one of the most common ways overload shows up. It's worth a gentle wind-down and, if it's persistent, a real conversation with your doctor — not another hour of scrolling in the dark.

03

PART THREE

Your 7-day quiet reset

One small change a day for a week. Gentle on purpose — this is a recalibration, not a boot camp. Worksheets follow so you can make it stick.



THE 7-DAY QUIET RESET

The first two days

We start with awareness and the single highest-impact move.

Nothing dramatic — just noticing, then quieting the buzz.

DAY 1 · NOTICE

Watch your inputs

Don't change anything. Just observe where the noise enters and how you feel after each one. Jot a few lines on the Input Audit worksheet. Awareness first.

DAY 2 · QUIET THE BUZZ

The notification detox

Spend ten minutes turning off every notification that hasn't earned the right to interrupt you. Keep calls and real messages from real people. That's the day.

Tonight

Notice the silence where the buzzing used to be. It might feel slightly uncomfortable — even like you're missing something. Sit with that for a second. That discomfort is the habit, not the truth.

THE 7-DAY QUIET RESET

Days three and four

Now we add a little structure to your attention and clear some space on the screen.

DAY 3 · FOCUS

One focus block

Do a single 25-minute block on one named task with your phone in another room. Just one. Notice the urge to switch, and let it pass without acting on it.

DAY 4 · DECLUTTER

The 20-minute declutter

Run the digital declutter checklist. Move the tempting apps off your home screen, delete a few you never use, clear the badges. Boring screen, calmer mind.

A note on imperfection

You'll slip. You'll grab your phone out of habit and find yourself three feeds deep. That's not failure — that's the old groove. Just notice, set it down, and carry on. Self-criticism is its own kind of noise.

THE 7-DAY QUIET RESET

Days five and six

Curate your sources, then protect the most important hour of your day — the one before sleep.

DAY 5 · CURATE

Put inputs on a diet

Choose your two or three trusted sources and one daily window to check them. Unfollow or mute a few feeds that leave you tense. Less in, on purpose.

DAY 6 · WIND DOWN

A real evening off-ramp

Set a screens-down time. Park tomorrow on paper. Do three small calming things in the same order. Charge the phone outside the bedroom if you can.

By now

Most people feel a small but real shift around here — a fraction more room in the head, a beat of pause before the reach. It's quiet, not dramatic. Quiet is the point.

Day seven, and after

DAY 7 · REFLECT & KEEP ONE

Choose what stays

Look back at the week. Which one move made the biggest difference for the least effort? Keep that one. Just that one. A single change you actually keep beats six you abandon by Friday.

Keeping it going (lightly)

You don't need to white-knuckle this forever. A few quiet defaults do most of the work:

- Notifications stay off by default. New app? It earns the buzz or it doesn't get it.
- One daily window for the feeds and the news, then closed.
- Phone sleeps outside the bedroom most nights.
- When you feel the flood rising, you name it — "I'm overloaded, not broken" — and trim one input.

Quiet isn't something you achieve once. It's a handful of small choices you keep making.

WORKSHEET 1

Your input audit

Day 1 of the reset. For one ordinary day, log where the noise comes in. The "after" column is the real data.

INPUT	WHEN / HOW OFTEN	HOW I FEEL AFTER	KEEP · TRIM · CUT

One thing I'll trim or cut first: _____

WORKSHEET 2

Notification decisions

Day 2. Go app by app. Default to off. Keep only what a real person needs to reach you with, right now.

APP / CHANNEL	ON OR OFF?	WHY

Reminder

You can always turn one back on. In a week, see how few you actually missed.

WORKSHEET 3

7-day focus tracker

One protected focus block a day. Note the task and a word for how it went. Watch the streak quietly build.

DAY	THE ONE THING I FOCUSED ON	MINUTES	HOW IT WENT
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			

The block I want to keep doing: _____

WORKSHEET 4

Your evening wind-down

Design a short, repeatable off-ramp. Fill the blanks, then do the same thing each night. Repetition is what makes it a signal.

My screens-down time is _____

Tonight I'll park on paper: _____

My three small calming things, in order:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The phone charges _____ (ideally not the
bedroom)

The 5-4-3-2-1, for the nights your mind won't stop

5 see · 4 feel · 3 hear · 2 smell · 1 taste. Slowly. It won't fix everything, but it can bring you back into the room long enough to rest.

BEFORE YOU GO

The ways a reset quietly fails

Not because you lack willpower — because these traps are easy to fall into. Name them now and you'll spot them later.

- **Going all-or-nothing.** Deleting every app on a Sunday and reinstalling them all by Wednesday. Smaller and kept beats dramatic and abandoned, every time.
- **Replacing one input with another.** Quitting one feed only to pour the freed-up time into a different one. The goal is space, not a new place to put the same restlessness.
- **Treating the slip as proof it's hopeless.** One bad evening isn't a verdict. The people who keep these changes are simply the ones who restart without the self-flagellation.
- **Skipping the worksheets.** Reading about quiet is pleasant and changes nothing. The doing — the audit, the focus block, the wind-down — is where it gets real.
- **Expecting to feel amazing.** You're aiming for a little more room and a little less hum. Quiet is subtle. Don't miss it by waiting for fireworks.

If you only remember one line

You don't have to win against your phone. You just have to let a little less in, a little more on purpose.

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

A few honest answers

"Won't I miss something important if I turn everything off?"

Genuinely important news has a way of reaching you — through a person, a call, a text. What you'll miss is the churn, which was never serving you. After a week, notice how little you actually missed.

"I've tried digital detoxes and they never stick."

Detoxes rarely stick because they're built on deprivation and willpower. This isn't a detox — it's a recalibration of your defaults. Off-by-default notifications and one daily window don't require willpower once they're just how things are.

"Is this anxiety, or just modern life?"

Sometimes both, and they feed each other. This guide can ease the load that fuels everyday overwhelm. But if anxiety is constant, frightening, or getting in the way of your life, that deserves more than a workbook — please talk to a qualified professional. That's strength, not failure.

"My work requires me to be reachable all day."

Then keep work channels on during work hours and ruthlessly quiet everything else. The goal isn't unreachability — it's removing the dozens of non-work tugs stacked on top of the few that matter.



IN CLOSING

A quieter life is closer than it feels

I want to leave you with the thing I most wish someone had told me in my loud year: the goal was never to be more disciplined about the noise. It was to need less of it.

When you let a little less in, something quietly returns. You finish a thought. You're actually in the room with the people you love. You read a thing and remember it. You lie down and your mind, for once, lies down too.

None of it requires becoming a different person. It just requires making a few small choices, again and again, in your favor. You already made the first one — you read to the end of this, on purpose, without checking anything. That counts. That's the whole skill, right there.

Be gentle with your attention. It's been working very hard. — Maya

IF YOU'D LIKE TO KEEP GOING

Where to find the rest of it

If this helped, there's more of the same calm, plain-language kind of thing waiting for you — no hype, no fixing-your-brain-in-7-days promises.

The free letter

I write to readers regularly with small, practical things for an anxious mind — the stuff that actually helps, in your inbox, free. If you got this guide from the site, you're likely already on the list. If not, you can join at beawareofme.com.

IF YOU WANT TO GO DEEPER

Calm Your Mind. Reset Your Life.

A small collection of guides that pick up where this one leaves off — sleep, anxiety, burnout, and steadier days — written in the same grounded, research-informed voice. It's a paid bundle, kept deliberately affordable, for readers who want the longer version.

You'll find it at beawareofme.com/calm-your-mind-reset-your-life

No pressure either way. This free guide stands on its own — keep it, work the worksheets, share the link with someone who needs a quieter head. That's more than enough.

ABOUT

beawareofme.com

beawareofme.com is a small, independent publication about mental and emotional wellbeing — anxiety, stress, burnout, sleep, self-care, and the ordinary business of staying steady in a loud world. The writing is warm and plain on purpose. No jargon, no panic, no miracle cures.

About Maya

Maya Ellis is the voice behind the site. She's not a therapist or a doctor — she's a writer who came to this through her own burnout and slow rebuild, and who has spent years reading the research and translating it into things a person can actually use. She writes the resource she needed at 3 a.m., for everyone else awake at 3 a.m.

What we believe

That good mental-health information should be honest, calm, and free of hype — that it should respect you enough to hedge when the science is uncertain, and care about you enough to send you to a real professional when that's what you need.

Questions, or want to say hello? contact@beawareofme.com

PLEASE READ THIS

An important note & where to get support

This guide is for general education and self-help. It is **not medical advice**, not therapy, and not a substitute for care from a licensed professional. Information overload, stress, and anxiety can overlap with medical conditions — if your overwhelm is constant, severe, or interfering with your life, please talk to your doctor or a qualified mental-health professional. Nothing here is a diagnosis, and following it is at your own discretion.

If you need support now

United States — Call or text **988** to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, 24/7, free and confidential.

Anywhere — Find a helpline in your country at findahelpline.com.

Always — If you or someone else is in immediate danger, contact your local emergency number.

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