The Unstuck Reset: 6 Tiny Shifts to Break Through Overwhelm

By Ali Mattu, Ph.D. Updated May 7, 2025

Welcome

If you've been feeling overwhelmed lately, frozen, numb, scattered, stuck, you're not alone. This is the number one concern I'm hearing right now, from clients, from viewers, and from people just like you.

The world hasn't gotten any easier. You're carrying a lot. And trying to hold it all together in a time like this? That's not a personal failure. That's a natural response to a world that keeps asking more than it gives back.

That's why I made this.

The Unstuck Reset is a six-day experience designed to help you break through emotional gridlock. Each day offers a small shift, grounded in psychology and real-world experience, to help you relieve pressure, reset your stress, and start moving forward again.

You don't need to fix everything. You don't need to get your "motivation back." You just need one small step.

Let's take it together.

— Dr. Ali Mattu

Stress ≠ Failure What if stress isn't a problem to fix but a signal that you care?

💡 Big Idea

Most people think stress means something is wrong with them. But stress is actually a sign that something *matters* to you. It shows up when your values collide with pressure, uncertainty, or challenge. You're not broken, you're engaged. The shift here is to stop hating your stress and start listening to it.

<u> Reflect</u>

What's one thing that's been stressing you out lately?

Now ask yourself: What does this stress trying to tell me?



Reframe your stress as a sign of care.

Use this sentence to guide you:

"This stress is showing me that I care about _____."

Say it out loud or write it down where you'll see it today.

- □ Named a current stressor
- □ Identified the value behind it
- □ Reframed stress as proof I care

Complete the Stress Cycle

Your brain can't calm down if your body still thinks it's under threat.

💡 Big Idea

Most advice about stress starts in your head: deep breaths, positive thoughts, mindfulness. But your stress response begins in the body. It's designed to help you survive danger *by moving*. If you don't complete that cycle, the stress lingers. Today's shift is to let your body do what it was built to do: move through it.

<u> Reflect</u>

When you feel overwhelmed, what does your body do? Do you freeze? Clench? Fidget? Shut down? Something else?

What physical movement helps you *feel* like you've done something? Like you can move forward to something else? Or that you've earned some rest?

🔁 Tiny Shift

Do one physical action to complete a stress response.

Pick something short and simple, like:

- Giving your muscles something to do: walk, stretch, dance.
- Slowing your breath: longer exhales naturally trigger calm.
- Connecting with green spaces: hikes, parks, or even nature videos.
- Doing something joyful: hobbies, comedy, gaming.

Then say to yourself:

"I'm helping my body feel safe again."

- $\hfill\square$ Noticed how my body holds stress
- □ Chose one movement to help it release
- Completed the cycle (even for just 1 minute)

Get Unstuck with One Tiny Step *You don't need motivation. You need momentum.*

💡 Big Idea

When you're overwhelmed, even basic tasks feel impossible. That's not laziness. It's inertia. The brain needs a cue that change is possible. That's where the "miracle question" comes in. It helps you imagine the life you want and identify *one* small action to move toward it. Not a big leap. Just a nudge.

<u>≼</u> Reflect

Imagine this: You wake up tomorrow and your biggest stress is magically gone. What's the first thing you'd notice? What would you feel or do differently?

Now ask: What's the *simplest possible* version of that change I could try today? What would get in the way of that small change? Who can help?



Take one micro-action that moves you forward.

Start with the most doable version. That's the trick.

- $\hfill\square$ Answered the miracle question
- □ Identified one micro-step
- $\hfill\square$ Took the smallest version of that step

Ask for Support (Without Feeling Weak)

You don't need a ton of friends. You just need the right kind of help, at the right time.

💡 Big Idea

Stress is easier to carry when someone else holds part of it with you. But asking for help can feel awkward, vulnerable, or even selfish. The truth? Humans evolved to survive *together*. Support isn't weakness. It's how we're wired to deal with anxiety. And it can be as simple as sending a single text.

<u> Reflect</u>

Think of one person who feels *safe* to reach out to right now.

What kind of support could they help with?

- Just to talk?
- Some advice?
- A quick favor?
- A tiny dose of human connection?

🔁 Tiny Shift

Use one of the following scripts, or write your own, and send it. Or save it for later when you really need it.

- "Can I get your take on something? I just need a second opinion."
- "I'm feeling a bit off today. Would you be up for chatting sometime soon?"
- "It's been a long week. Want to hang out or just catch up?"
- "Can I ask for a small favor? Totally okay if you're busy."

Or, if you'd rather warm up first: Try messaging an AI:

"Can you help me sort out what I'm feeling?"

- □ Named someone I could reach out to
- □ Identified the kind of support I want
- □ Sent (or saved) one message

Take Back Control from the Noise

Not everything that demands your attention deserves it.

💡 Big Idea

Stress isn't just about what's happening in your life, it's about what's happening *in your feed*. Doomscrolling, constant updates, bad news rabbit holes...your attention gets hijacked. And that creates emotional overload. Today's shift is about protecting your brain from information that overwhelms and curating what helps you feel more connected, hopeful, and grounded.

<u> Reflect</u>

Think about your digital habits:

- What kinds of content drain you?
- What kinds of content restore you?
- Where are you spending time online that leaves you feeling worse?

🔁 Tiny Shift

Change one thing about your info environment.

Pick one or more:

- Unfollow 3 accounts that stress you out
- Subscribe to 1 source that lifts you up
- Delete or move 1 app off your home screen
- Set a 10-minute timer when you scroll
- Choose one "no screen" zone in your day (bathroom, bedtime, etc.)

Then say to yourself: "I get to choose what I let in."

- $\hfill\square$ Noticed how my media diet impacts my mood
- □ Took one step to protect my attention
- $\hfill\square$ Made space for content that nourishes me

Find Meaning in the Mess

Feeling numb doesn't mean you're broken. It means you're normal in an abnormal world.

💡 Big Idea

When the stress never seems to end, you can go from overwhelmed to emotionally shut down. But numbness isn't the end of the road. It's your mind protecting itself. The way back isn't to "snap out of it," but to reconnect with *meaning*. Not grand purpose. Just one small act of care, service, or creation that reminds you: you still matter.

<u> Reflect</u>

What is life asking of you right now?

- To care for someone else?
- To show up with strength?
- To do meaningful work?
- To simply survive the day?

Now ask: What is one very small thing I can do today that makes life feel more meaningful?

🔁 Tiny Shift

Do one simple act of meaning. Examples:

- Text a friend just to check in
- Help someone in a small way (hold a door, offer directions)

- Share something useful, funny, or kind online
- Water a plant. Sweep your neighbor's sidewalk.
- Be the best part of someone's day

Your version might be different. The point is to feel like you showed up.

- Reflected on what life is asking of me
- □ Found one small, meaningful act
- Did something that helped me feel present and purposeful

After the Reset

You Did the Work. Now Keep It Light.

6 Final Reflection

You've made it through six days of shifts. None of them huge, but all of them meaningful. Take a moment to notice:

- What felt surprisingly helpful?
- What was harder than expected?
- Which practice do you want to return to the most?

<u>≰</u> Reflection Prompt:

"One shift that really helped me was..." "Something I now understand about my stress is..." "Moving forward, I want to remember..."

You don't have to be perfect. You just have to stay in motion.

🧭 How to Keep Going

Stress doesn't disappear. But your relationship with it can change.

Here are a few ways to keep the momentum going:

- Pick one day each week to revisit your favorite exercise
- Save your tiny shifts list somewhere visible
- Pair one habit (like brushing your teeth) with a 1-minute check-in
- Keep asking: What's the smallest step forward I can take right now?

Suggested Daily Routine

Use this as a reset you can come back to anytime.

Time of Day	Reset Practice	Based On…
Morning	Ask: "What's stressing me today and what does that say about what I care about?"	Day 1
Midday	Move your body in any way (walk, shake, stretch)	Day 2
Afternoon	Try a micro action or reach out to someone for support	Day 3–4
Evening	Curate your attention (log off, unfollow, choose joy)	Day 5
Weekly	Do something small but meaningful for someone else	Day 6

💬 A Final Note from Dr. Ali

It might sound insignificant. But every time I have these small moments, helping someone, showing up, putting good into the world, I walk away feeling like I made a tangible, positive difference in someone's life.

And that's everything.

You might not be like me.

In fact, many of you have told me that one of your biggest struggles is finding the confidence to connect with other people.

But I know you have some strengths. Some gift. Something you can do that will help someone else. Something you can create that will make the world a little better.

It might be as simple as noticing one person you see every day, and helping them with something they struggle with every day.

Find that thing. Make it your thing. That's more than enough.

It's how we build the strength to keep moving forward.

Small steps. Real progress.

I hope this reset has shown you that stress isn't just something to fix. It's a message. It's asking you to show up. To take action. To live like you still matter, because you do.

That's what I've tried to do here. To show up for you in this unprecedented...yuck we're in.

So let me ask you:

What is life asking of you right now?

Don't let the noise of the world sabotage you.

You don't need to have it all figured out.

You just need one step. One small spark. Start there. Start somewhere. Start now.

—Dr. Ali