

From Overwhelm to Flow: Sailing the Seas of Self with Courage, Meaning, and Resilience

Dessy T. Levinson

Crate Mind

(308pp)

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Grounded in neuroscience and psychology, the self-help book From Overwhelm to Flow suggests a radically accepting approach to the struggles that scare one most.

Creative director, venture capitalist, and coach Dessy T. Levinson's self-help book *From Overwhelm to Flow* is about combating exhaustion with creativity, courage, and meaning.

Written with awareness that the world seems to be tilting off its axis and in the face of intense struggles, the book suggests a radical strategy: embrace your struggles. Its framework, CRATE—Clarity, Regulation, Agency, Trust, and Energy—is grounded in neuroscience and psychology. This framework can be applied in everyday life and business settings and is bolstered by insights such as about people looking for competitive advantages even in weak markets.

The book distills effective client advice into a general guide for all who think “that humaning is hard” and builds off familiar premises such as that everyone is the hero of their own story and that people should examine the internal stories that scare them most. Ideas about the mind and human nature center it throughout, but its work is also organized by concepts, such as doing what scares you, finding clarity, building trust, and drawing energy, all representing fluid phases of personal development. Throughout, complex concepts like predictive processing are explained in an accessible fashion, and the book's recommendations are complemented by personal anecdotes, as of growing up in a bookish immigrant home and about sessions with clients. Popular culture references also play in, with the book pulling lessons from *Deadwood* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* and including references to kryptonite in connection to superpowers to flesh its perspective out.

Some clichés are included: a heart thunders; gathering storm clouds are referenced. Still, while the prose is quite abstract in explaining the framework itself, and is prone to jargon in addressing career situations, its fresh turns of phrase do hold interest. New York City is “a place that surely demands all the thought and tears one is willing to offer it,” while Levinson's physicist father and empathetic mother are compared to ice and lava, variously forging obsidian and ash. By the book's end, it has made a stirring case for engaging with uncertainty, standing against entropy, and returning to one's natural state, all in the name of becoming one's full, spacious self.

Lighthearted and high-minded, *From Overwhelm to Flow* is an inspirational self-help guide about resilience in the face of challenges and achieving an expansive sense of self.

JOSEPH S. PETE (February 10, 2025)

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