

Overcommitted Case Study

HOW *Reclamation* HELPED ASHLEY BEST-RAITEN REGAIN CONTROL OVER HER COMMITMENTS AND REDEFINE HER LIFE



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ASHLEY BEST-RAITEN

When Ashley Best-Raiten discovered Stratejoy, she was sitting on a beach in the Dominican Republic, dreading going back home.

She had all the components of a great life — a beautiful home, a loving family, and lots of community involvement — but her life had gotten away from her. She'd become everyone's go-to person, which had left her overwhelmed, overloaded, and directionless.

"My kids were doing cub scouts, rock climbing, swim team, and baseball," Ashley said. "There were also constant playdates. I'm technically a stay-at-home-mom but I was working 60-70 hours a week, unpaid, as everything from the school's HSA treasurer to the book sale volunteer. I was also involved in politics and run an Indivisible group of 600 people. Plus, I'd become the communications director for

the local Democratic party, also unpaid.

"I kept adding things to my plate, thinking it would make me more fulfilled, but it was just too much. It was affecting my parenting, and my husband was so annoyed because I was always going to another meeting. I just felt totally lost and I didn't know what to keep and what to let go of."

Drowning in commitments and unable to decompress despite being on vacation, Ashley saw a Facebook ad for Holiday Council. Knowing she had to do something, she decided to give it a try.

"Holiday Council made sense to me and I did all of the work," Ashley said.

"It was the best thing ever and I wanted to tell everyone I knew about it."

As Holiday Council finished up, Ashley heard about Reclamation. She recognized it as an opportunity to keep exploring, though she was a little hesitant about the investment — both in time and money. After learning about the

payment plan and committing to block off the time necessary to do the work, she decided to sign up.

"I told myself I'd treat it like I was taking a class and see how it went for the first few months," she said. "I realized the worst thing that could happen was I was out a little money."

As the first month's theme of Authenticity began, Ashley realized Reclamation's curriculum wasn't going to be easy — and some of her early realizations surprised her.

"I spent a lot of time feeling clueless about who my authentic self was," Ashley said. "I realized I had internalized other people's perspectives about what made me authentic, but nothing that I had claimed as my own. Then I realized that I didn't like my authentic self, which was a little horrifying! What am I supposed to do if my authentic self isn't making me happy?"

Slowly but surely, Ashley started to look at the pieces of herself she didn't like.

She discovered that despite her experience, she hated electoral politics and decided it was time to leave it behind. She also noticed that her reactionary tendency to say "yes" to everything wasn't serving her, and instead was overloading her life.

"I started separating what I do and what other people expect of me from who I really am," Ashley said. "It let me reimagine the concept of authenticity and I realized that who I am is a lot of things — not just my goals and titles. I'd never sat down and thought about that thoroughly before."

With that difficult, important work underway, the rest of the Reclamation process began to unfold. Ashley said the month of Body Love was especially impactful.

"For me, Body Love month was about being in touch with my feelings and how that affects me physically," Ashley said. "I actually lost a ton of weight, and not because of my diet or exercise. I became aware of what I was feeling and why I was taking an action, and then what need that action was filling. Having that awareness has just shifted my life."

Ashley said another huge month for her was Ritual, where she made some paradigm-shifting connections about herself and how she interacts with others.

"I explored the divine feminine, and I realized that a lot of my struggle is wanting to be seen as my feminine self without having to mold myself to be powerful in a masculine way," Ashley said. "Ritual month helped me define what my definition of success is and really divorce myself from what everyone is telling me: that I should be the local party chair in the next two years or that I should run for state senate or climb the corporate ladder. I was able to realize those things are out of alignment with what I really want."





Ashley said an important feature of Reclamation is the Facebook community, which helped to keep her on track and connected to people, all of whom were non-judgemental, supportive, and understanding.

"Being able to pop in the group and post a ridiculous thought or just share that I had a bad day was so helpful, especially knowing that everyone was coming at it from the same framework," Ashley said.

Looking back on her year, Ashley said Reclamation has been key to helping her regain ownership over her life.

"I'm finally at a point where I feel like my time is manageable during the day," Ashley said. "I don't feel that I'm running a thousand places. I'm finally able to say, 'I'm really sorry that I'm not able to do that' and not feel bad. I now feel good about what I am doing and I've been able to weed out the stuff that isn't serving me. I don't need to be the person who does everything."

This new approach has impacted Ashley's mood, as well as her family life.

"I'm happier, I'm calmer, and my husband and I are in an amazingly good place," Ashley said. "We're able to have harder conversations that, before, would've resulted in me shutting down. I've also become more patient with my kids."

She noted that while the work was definitely difficult, the results she's seen from Reclamation have made it worth it — and it's an opportunity available to anyone.

"Reclamation is the chance to really figure out for yourself what your best life actually is," Ashley said. "Not what Oprah tells you it is or what Sheryl Sandberg tells you it is, but what it is for you — and how you go about having it."

"Yes, it's a lot of work, but it leads you to the work that you need to do, and that's different for everybody. Reclamation gives you the tools so you can start living the life that you really want to live, right now."