

Overcoming Procrastination



We've all heard the joke about the Procrastination Conference where no one showed up. But the very real time and productivity losses from procrastination are no joke. Procrastination can sap creativity and spirit leaving deadlines and dollars in its wake. The good news is that procrastination, like any human behavior is something that can change.

All we have to fear is fear itself

If it's true that opportunity is buried in the hole called procrastination, you have to wonder who dug the hole. For most of us, fear is at least a contributing factor in why we put off taking action again and again. Fears can range from the typical anxiety of success/failure where apprehension about the end results keeps us immobile, to the less typical fears of pain, rejection and embarrassment. No matter the root cause, gaining awareness about the

fear using a questioning technique can help unleash the hold it has on our ability to move ahead. For instance, if you keep putting off the task of setting a medical appointment, ask yourself what you are afraid of. Is it that your blood pressure is too high and you will have to go on medication? Is it that the doctor will want to give you a tetanus booster and you are afraid of the needle? Keep questioning with scenarios of cause until you get your answer. Use your newfound knowledge, to confront your fear and tackle the task.

Worst first approach

Even though the procrastinator has a good idea of why they are stuck, they may still need a push to get moving in the right direction. The Worst First approach challenges the procrastinator to pick the most bothersome part of a task and attack it first to get it out of the way. Removing the worst barrier is usually enough to free us up to tackle the rest. For example, if the report you are writing requires a thorough review of budget shortfalls, a task you detest, get the review out of the way first, so you won't be distracted by the thought of it and delay doing any work on the report.

Pros and cons

If you have put off a task over and over, the Pros and Cons strategy may work for you. Simply draw a line down the center of a piece of paper. On the right side list all the consequences that will result if you keep procrastinating on the task. On the left side, list all the benefits that will result if you take action and complete the task. Generally on measure the pros side out weighs the cons side, clearing the path for action.

Divide and conquer

When overwhelm shuts down your ability to work you need a technique that makes getting started as simple and easy as possible. The tried and true method of Divide and Conquer helps the procrastinator break down all the steps of a task into small but manageable portions. Then, one by one each step is addressed, completed and crossed off the list, usually resulting in a comment like, "That wasn't so bad."

No matter how long you have been stuck in procrastination, there is always a way to overcome it. When you do, you too will feel as if a huge weight has been lifted from your shoulders leaving you with a refreshed outlook. Now, get back to what you were supposed to be doing.

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