

Stop Waiting and Start Living

Strategies To Combat Procrastination

Procrastination is one of the main causes of poor time management. The definition of procrastination is, “to postpone or delay action needlessly.” Notice that the definition doesn’t say “to postpone or delay for a valid or logical reason”. The defining word is **needlessly**. Sometimes there is good reason to delay an action or a decision, such as if you don’t have enough information, or if something else has to happen first in the logical order of things.

For example, if you were redecorating your home, you would put off laying new carpet until after you’ve painted, to avoid getting paint on the new carpet. Putting off laying the carpet isn’t procrastinating, it’s sequencing a series of actions in the most logical order. Call it deliberate procrastination, if you will. It’s putting off a task until a more logical time.

True procrastination plays a huge part in the poor use of time and in disorganization. What you put off for “later” ultimately becomes a less important priority as time goes on, but in reality may become even more urgent. When you’re in the habit of procrastinating (and it is a bad habit just like any other), you start and continually add to a “mental pile” of items to do later. They often end up languishing there and they eventually become buried in more and more things that you’ve put off until later.

Here are strategies you can use to begin changing the destructive habit of putting things off. Some are mental strategies and others are physical. Combining two or more increases your chances of success.

Mental Strategies

1. Vividly imagine the way you'll feel inside after the task or project is complete.
2. Focus on your desired result, not your fear or inaction.
3. Imagine yourself completing the task or project easily, quickly and with no setbacks.
4. Tune into your procrastination language in your head and derail it with positive thoughts of "I want to", "I can," and "I enjoy" instead.
5. Let go of perfectionism. Many things aren't worth doing perfectly, so just start and do your best.

Physical Strategies

1. Get an accountability buddy to keep you on task along the way.
2. Work out the steps to the project on paper in advance to clarify your thoughts and eliminate all the emotional whirlwind around why you don't want to begin the task or project.
3. Master the art of starting. Over and over again.
4. Do the hard parts first. Or...
5. Do the easy parts first. Whichever motivates you more is the one you should choose.
6. Keep a progress log so you don't lose sight of how much you've accomplished.
7. Break your project into small, manageable chunks and create interim deadlines for yourself along the way.
8. Build in rewards for yourself as you finish each step or as you complete the project.

When you recognize that you're entrenched in the habit of procrastinating, being aware of it is the first step to conquering it. By using the strategies outlined above, you'll be well on your way to making powerful and positive changes in your life and being more effective, productive, and ultimately a happier person.

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