



The Lure of Procrastination: Six Things to Ignore

Given the results of procrastination - hurried work, mistakes, stress, missed deadlines - it's a wonder why anyone would put off what can be done right away. And yet who doesn't let projects slide, especially ones we don't like doing?

If you find yourself procrastinating on a task, try thinking of it in very specific and concrete terms to encourage you to complete it sooner.

One way of doing this is to break it down into parts. For example, if it is a writing or speaking project, you could list the following steps:

- Make a decision (topic, main points, goal)
- Write an outline
- Get input, do research
- Write a first draft
- Review with others
- Edit
- Submit

Breaking a project into steps makes you aware of the time required and will usually spur you to get started.

It's important to not let your mind wander by trying to analyze why you're stuck and why you're putting it off. It doesn't matter.

If you find yourself experiencing anxiety, do your best to ignore these negative thoughts. Instead, focus on breaking the project up into small, manageable parts.

This helps get the ball rolling and reduces the size of the task (and the accompanying emotional baggage) so it immediately becomes more doable.

Start with something small and then move on to the next step.

This requires that you ignore several things:

A Message from Nancy...

I have a couple of questions to ask you:

1. Is your business as successful as you think it should be?
2. Are you and your team able to pinpoint the solutions necessary to create positive changes to get where you need to go?



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Proffitt Management Solutions
326 Maddock St.
West Palm Beach, FL
www.ProffittManagement.com
561-582-6060
info@proffittmanagement.com

1. **Your mind:** Don't try to understand why you want to procrastinate. Resist the temptation to figure it out. If you get started on small chunks of the project, you'll have plenty of time and energy to analyze it afterwards.
2. **Your emotions:** Don't let feelings interfere with focusing on a task. Self-doubt, resentments, and insecurities are typical, but it ultimately doesn't matter. Remember that motivational slogan, "Just do it?" When you focus on getting some aspect of the task done, you'll find your emotions naturally taking a back seat.
3. **The clock and the calendar:** Don't pressure yourself by thinking about how little time is left. When you start breaking down a project into small steps, you'll discover how much time is realistically required. We sometimes have a poor conception of how much time it requires to complete a task. Rather than panicking at the thought that you only have a week to complete a project, break down the parts of the task into real time and you may find through this process that it is merely a three-hour job.
4. **Your stress:** There are a number of techniques one can use to deal with anxiety: deep breathing, progressive relaxation, visualization, physical exercise, meditation, humor and music. Engage in these after you've already completed a part of the task. In fact, you can use some of these activities as a reward for partial task completion.
5. **Distractions:** Turn off all music, TV, cell phones and the Internet, and try not eating or drinking until you get going. If caffeine helps, fine, but preparing it can also provide an excuse from actually working. Too much coffee can make you easily distractible. You want to become narrowly focused on your goal completion, so avoid letting anything interfere or slow you down.
6. **Excuses:** The mind is amazingly clever at times, and it will sometimes sabotage what you really want. Let's face it, we humans have competing commitments, priorities, and multiple demands.

If you find yourself coming up with good reasons to procrastinate, remember that good reasons make for good excuses, but they're

still excuses.

Excuses stop you from doing what's needed and what's important. For example, "I'm not in the mood for this," can be reframed as, "I'm not in the mood, but if I start with one small part, I'll get inspired."

Motivation

If you still find yourself procrastinating, then maybe you're not really committed to the task. Perhaps someone else is requiring you to do it. You'll have to get creative about finding your own motivation. Somebody else's motivation won't necessarily work for you.

What are the payoffs for you? Task completion can bring rewards, such as freeing up time for things that really do matter to you. What's required is total honesty about it. You may not like it, or agree with it, but if an assignment is required, then you may as well commit to it in order to get past it so you can move on to other, more rewarding things. Procrastinating will only drag out the pain.

Focus and Concentration

The average person contends with an astonishing number of distractions. One survey found an office worker switches tasks every three minutes, and once interrupted, takes nearly a half an hour to go back to the original task. Between emails, phones, and other interruptions, attention is highly fractured in our modern day society. Multi-tasking is rarely as productive as we may think.

You have to tune out unnecessary details in order to gather what's significant and pertinent to the task at hand. Practice and training can dramatically improve your powers of concentration. Certain sports and games can also help. Recent studies have shown that meditation and mindfulness training improves focus and concentration, as well.

It comes down to a matter of taking control: What do you want to do with your time? How can you find motivation and enthusiasm? How do you circumvent your excuses? How can you get more done so that you'll have more time for life's truly valuable moments? These are profound questions to deliberate when considering the option to procrastinate.