

WHY PUT OFF TOMORROW WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY?

(Eight Steps to Overcoming Procrastination and Reclaiming Your Life)

This article is easy for me to write because I see this in my daily life - from loved ones, co-workers, friends, and networking associates. Many people suffer from procrastination, and it can bring your life to a screeching halt unless you learn how to get a handle on the situation. Following are eight steps to help rid yourself of the procrastination bug:

Get Rid of Guilt

Do you feel guilty about not accomplishing your personal goals? These goals could range from getting dressed in the morning to organizing your boxes of loose photos into an album to writing a great romance novel. Guilty feelings are self-perpetuating and lead to more procrastination and less activity. Negative thoughts predominate and depression can set in. You feel defeated before you begin, becoming paralyzed with inactivity; because if you do not perform or act, then you can't fail or be judged harshly. Guilty feelings are circular while you need to move in a straight line with one foot in front of another: small steps, giant gains and that is exactly what you can do to counteract all this negativity. Take a small step. Get up in the morning, wash your face and get dressed. If you can't take a walk into the sunshine today, just get dressed and sitting next to a sunny window is a good start. Praise yourself for that! If you have a list of ten things to accomplish and you do only one, cross it off the list and feel proud. Dwell on success, not failure.

Clean Out The Clutter

Check your surroundings. Is your pocketbook, desk, or personal space cluttered? If the answer is yes, cleaning out the clutter is an important step you must take. Begin small and finish big. You do not have to tackle an entire room or closet. Start with your pocketbook or briefcase. Then move on to a bigger task – your work space. The rest will fall into place because there will be no stopping you once you experience a pleasantly organized work environment or desk area. The physical organization will symbolize the mental one. Simplify to reach your target.

Keep Your Expectations Realistic

Do you have unrealistic expectations? If you feel the need to be perfect, you will never get started. For example, if you are researching buying a car, you will never finish searching for that ideal car. If you are painting a room, you will always notice an imperfection. Nothing is perfect. Most things are beautiful in their imperfect state, like a garden. Lower your expectations and be satisfied with the implementation. Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep. Just do it! You can revise, repaint, reread, rewrite, refinish and reconstruct. Ask a trusted friend's opinion. At some point, you will have to allow your project to have an independent existence like a child that is separate from the parent in body and mind.

Eliminate Distractions

Are you distracted and diffuse? Then create a working environment that is more serene. Eliminate or at least minimize noise and distractions. Make sure you have adequate lighting. Have the necessary equipment at hand. Sit in a posture that is conducive to good spinal

alignment and does not stress your back. Break large tasks into manageable chunks. Write down specific manageable goals and prioritize them. Just writing down your goals helps you make them concrete and achievable instead of abstractions.

Make It Interesting

Do you find the project boring? How can you propel yourself into action when you find a project empty and unrewarding? Don't vent, re-invent! Find a way to stimulate yourself bringing enthusiasm to your work. You have a powerful imagination at your disposal. Use your creativity, your sense of humor and your positive thoughts to infuse your task with creativity and fun. The line from the old song, "whistle while you work" does hold true. Your values and your actions should correspond. If the immediate work at hand isn't exciting, perhaps the larger picture is. You can always learn new skills to enhance your job.

See a Positive Outcome

Use positive visualization techniques to ensure that you complete your task. See yourself finishing the task at hand successfully. Imagine all the details, even the problems and glitches. Rehearse the scene in your mind often. See yourself working it all out. Then take a bow and hear the resounding applause. Visualize your accomplishment, and by all means, reward yourself upon completion!

Get Rid of the Small Stressors

Make sure to eliminate the small stressors in your life to minimize tension, unpleasantness and distraction. Those small stressors add up. For example, avoid stimulants like caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, processed white foods and sugars which will physically stress your body and, therefore, your mind. Get adequate sleep. Don't sweat the small stuff! If it's an uncontrollable, release it from your mind.

Exercise to Fuel Your Mind

For those of you who feel fatigued and just can't get around to do what you have to do, exercise! Ironically when you are most tired and feeling an energy drain, exercise will provide a boost, raise your endorphins and oxygenate the brain to think more clearly. Exercise promotes focused attention. Any kind of exercise will do, even walking for only ten minutes works wonders.

Be Patient with Yourself

Above all, always keep in mind that change happens slowly. Be grateful for every little change you make. Pat yourself on the back often, and if you need to collect yourself for a day and do less, forgive yourself and take the time off. It doesn't have to be all or nothing. The next day you can resume your schedule, much like a dieter who enjoys a dessert on the weekend, and resumes the diet on Monday morning. Build gradually. Get rid of toxic friends and nay sayers. Surround yourself with positive people who encourage you to get the job done!

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