

Overcoming Procrastination

Objective

To overcome your procrastination by understanding it's cause and making a plan to successfully achieve accomplish two projects.

What to Know

You may be putting off doing things for many reasons. But research shows that procrastination can lead to increased stress, health problems, and poor performance. Maybe you really want to get the project or task done, but it is as if your procrastination has a life of its own, and it is in charge. If that happens to you, you can take back control.

1. Identify why you are putting it off. Procrastination is an emotional reaction to something you do not want to do. Knowing *why* you keep putting something off can give you insight into how to get yourself moving.

Tim Pychyl, author of *Solving the Procrastination Puzzle*, identifies a set of triggers that make a task seem insurmountable. You tend to put things off if you think they are:

- Boring
- Frustrating
- Difficult
- Scary
- Not rewarding/no fun
- Ambiguous
- Unstructured

Once you know the triggers, you can see what you need to move forward.

2. Find techniques to help you turn it around.

- Forgive yourself. Beating up on yourself for not getting something done will not help you get it done! Pat yourself on the back for deciding to get it done, and proceed.
- Stop calling yourself lazy or other negative labels. Kicking yourself when you are down does not help you get up.
- Change what you are telling yourself about the task. Instead of focusing on the dread of doing it, give yourself some encouragement: "This is not my favorite thing to do, but I can get through it," or "It will feel so great to cross this off my list."
- Sit down and consider the pros and cons. What are the benefits of completing this task? What does avoiding it cost you?
- Get a buddy. Use peer support and peer pressure. Ask a friend to be your accountability partner, and explain how he/she can help. Sometimes just knowing someone will ask about it is enough to move you to action.
- Set a reward. You know all those fun things you do to distract yourself? Use them (or something else) as a reward for finishing the task.

- Make it less overwhelming by dividing the chore into chunks.
- Ask yourself, “Can I work on this chunk for an hour? 30 minutes? 15?” Choose the amount of time, set the timer, and go for it.
- Use tools. Get out your calendar and schedule time for the task (or a chunk of it). “I’ll get to it when I have time,” is not working, so make some time.
- Clear the decks so you are not tempted by distractions. Turn off your phone, close your email, web browser, and IM, turn the television off, and tell your housemates you are unavailable.
- Do not let perfectionism slow you down. If you think it has to be done perfectly, you will never start. Decide you would rather have it done than have it be perfect.

What to Do

Think of two things you are procrastinating about: one small and one more complex or challenging task.

Project #1	Project #2

Using Pynchyl’s list on the previous page for inspiration, name the obstacles for accomplishing each project or task. Be very specific in describing them, and write how you feel about each one. For example, one obstacle might be, “This feels too hard. I don’t know how to do it and I don’t think I can do it. I’m frozen.”

	Project #1	Project #2
Obstacle 1		
Obstacle 2		
Obstacle 3		

List as many actions as you can think of that you can take to address those blocks.

	Project #1	Project #2
	Actions I can take	Actions I can take
Obstacle 1		
Obstacle 2		
Obstacle 3		

Write an action plan (*when, where, how, who*) to address each of the blocks.

	Project #1	Project #2
Obstacle 1		
Obstacle 2		
Obstacle 3		

Fill out the chart below.

Project #1		Project #2	
Benefits of getting it done	Costs of not getting it done	Benefits of getting it done	Costs of not getting it done

What techniques can you use to make each of these tasks easier?

Project #1	Project #2

Now pull all of that together into a plan to successfully achieve your two projects!

Project #1	Project #2
I will:	I will:

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
