

11 WAYS TO OVERCOME PROCRASTINATION



Introduction

Procrastination kills. If you think that is a dramatic overstatement of the downside of putting things off until tomorrow, you may want to think again. Tomorrow never comes. This means you have to stop telling yourself that you will "do it tomorrow". Whatever needs to be done today should be tackled today. This is because procrastination builds on itself, and even the best intentions to accomplish tasks and responsibilities can be overwhelmed when you have ignored so much that you simply cannot get everything done.

This causes you to have feelings of resentment about yourself. You wonder why you continuously fail to hit due dates and accomplish goals. Depression is a common side-effect of procrastination. So are stress and anxiety. Your mental health suffers in many ways, and if you put off getting fit and healthy until tomorrow or next week, your physical health can suffer. You should also remember that people who procrastinate never seem to have any free time to enjoy their lives.

When you can't be counted on to get things done on time, this can have a negative impact on your career and business relationships. If your spouse continually believes you may not handle your relationship responsibilities in a timely manner, you could grow apart. There are so many reasons to stop procrastinating and start doing, and the following 11 tips for more productivity, less stress and more free time will help you do exactly that.

Treat Yourself to More Sleep

Sleep deprivation hurts you in so many ways. Whether you believe you are the exception or not, you should be getting 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night. If you routinely sleep fewer hours than you should, your mental health suffers. The lack of focus and short-term memory loss which arise after just one restless night in bed can lead to poor productivity. This may have you rationalizing that you have to put things off until tomorrow or next week because you can't get enough done today.

Sleep deprivation has been proven to raise your risk of conditions like diabetes and obesity, and when you are not your best physical self, procrastination blossoms and productivity declines.



Exercise Regularly for Better Physical Fitness

Exercise leads to the release of chemicals which make you feel good. Dopamine and other hormones receive a boost in production when you are physically active. Your body also automatically slows down the production of hormones like cortisol which cause you to stress out and become anxious. This means you feel better after exercise. When you feel good about yourself, you are more likely to tackle the tasks you have on your plate.

Exercise improves physical health, which is sometimes needed to help you push through a difficult day. Additionally, there is science-backed evidence that people who exercise regularly enjoy better mental health and focus than those who do not. The improved focus and mental functioning you get from exercise can help you stop procrastination dead in its tracks.



Stop Making Everything into a Bigger Deal Than It Is

Do you catastrophize? This is the practice of turning everything into a catastrophe. Any little problem or task becomes absolutely unbearable. Everything is blown out of proportion. Catastrophizing leads to procrastinating rather than taking action, because success in any endeavor is believed to be absolutely impossible. In some cases there is a mindset that taking on some responsibility will be physically and mentally devastating.

Try to keep things in perspective. If you are always making mountains out of mole hills, be honest with yourself. Whenever you have to attempt to do anything, ask yourself what the worst possible outcome really could be. Many times we make our lives more difficult than they actually are, and when you catastrophize everything, you are guaranteed to avoid taking action.

Think Long-Term

When you make a regular habit out of procrastinating, you never reach long-term goals. If you often look at your life and wonder why you are still stuck in the position you were 10 or 20 years ago, it may be because you are focusing on short-term gains and rewards. For instance, someone who procrastinates won't make that important phone call when they know they should, because they are enjoying the "right now" reward of avoiding the stress associated with that call.

Instead of focusing on the immediate stress-relieving benefit of avoiding some situation that makes you anxious, think of the good feeling you will have when this task has been accomplished.

Start Using a Physical or Digital Calendar or Personal Planner

People who procrastinate don't always use calendars or daily planners to plan and track their responsibilities and activities. When you have a calendar or personal planner you interact with daily, research shows you have a much greater chance of hitting deadlines and accomplishing goals. If you don't plan your activities each day, week and month, you are simply hoping that you will be able to find the time to do what is needed.

On the other hand, using a calendar to schedule everything you do guarantees you block out time periods required to get projects done. After a few weeks of getting used to scheduling your life, this becomes an unconscious habit which doesn't allow time for procrastination.



Set Realistic Goals

Always assuming you have enough time to finish a task can lead to procrastination. You look at something you have to get done and you tell yourself it will only take a couple of days. The due date for accomplishing that task is seven days away, so you figure you have at least four or five days before you have to get started. If you have correctly estimated the amount of time you will need, then everything works out well.

Problems arise when you underestimate the difficulty of the task.

What you thought would take a couple of days winds up taking three or four, and you end up being late. Not only does this mean that you miss the deadline for that task, but it means that future responsibilities are now pushed back also. Make sure you are being realistic with yourself about deadlines and timelines. Develop the habit of adding 20% or 30% to any estimation of time needed to accomplish a task. This practice can help ensure that you always block off enough time in your personal planner to get things done on time, and possibly early.

Be Honest about Why You Are Making Excuses

When you needlessly put things off until a later date, you are really just making excuses. Why are you doing this? What is the underlying cause that leads you to the justification process that has you lying to yourself about a particular situation or responsibility? What is the real reason you are making an excuse?

This requires that you are very honest with yourself. This process could shine the light on underlying emotions and character traits which are less than attractive. However, unless you get to the bottom of why you prefer making excuses about a task to actually taking action, you may never conquer your procrastinating tendencies.



Stop Waiting for the Perfect Time to Start

Procrastination is all about delaying a start time. You put off responsibilities, tasks or activities until a future date, because you don't want to get started right now. Sometimes this happens because we want all the conditions to be absolutely perfect before we undertake some endeavor. We reason that if all the stars are aligned properly and every variable and condition is favorable, then the task we are tackling will be handled easily.

There is no such thing as perfection in the human condition. If you are waiting for the perfect time to get started organizing your garage or saving for your retirement, your first step will never take place. Remember that good enough is good enough, and that if you do not start, you can never finish.

Eat the Elephant One Bite at a Time

How do you eat an elephant? You tackle this mountain of a task by eating the elephant one bite at a time. This is an exaggerated and obviously imaginary example of taking on a mammoth responsibility and finding out a way to look past the enormity of a large undertaking. Some jobs are so big that you cannot even imagine finishing them. You don't know where to begin. Since you can't even imagine what completion will look like, you never get started.

You put off tackling what you perceive to be a gargantuan and impossible task because you rationalize that even if you get started, your early efforts are going to have a minimal impact on the overall undertaking. This is the wrong attitude.

Think about a large purchase you have made in your life. When you bought your first home or car, you didn't get the money to do so overnight. You planned well in advance and began putting aside money and perhaps building your credit months or years before your purchase date.

You looked at some future date that seemed far off, and patiently took action on arriving at that date that would guarantee you had enough resources to make the large purchase. You ate the elephant one bite at a time, routinely and methodically saving small amounts of money here and there until your consistent, small efforts led to the achievement of your larger goal.

Pick a Procrastination-Pummeling Partner

There aren't too many significant accomplishments that don't benefit from an extra set of hands. In an attempt to stop procrastinating, it might make sense for you to choose a productivity-enhancing partner that will hold your feet to the flame and keep you on track when needed.

You can do the same for that individual. You each act as an accountability partner for the other. In many cases this does not mean your partner will physically help you accomplish some task. It does, however, mean that you have someone you can turn to that can provide the motivation and encouragement which might make the difference between sticking to your schedule, and putting your responsibilities off until a later date.



Forgive Yourself

If you only attach negative behaviors to failure, you will always put things off until tomorrow. You look at any potential endeavor as a possible failure rather than an eventual success, you associate negative feelings of stress, anxiety and resentment with the task at hand, and rather than encounter that possibility, you procrastinate.

This can happen over and over if you don't learn to recognize yourself as an imperfect person and forgive yourself when you experience failure.

If you are playing baseball and you hit a homerun in your first at-bat and then you never play again, this does not mean you are the greatest homerun hitter of all time. The same is true when you fail at anything. Hitting a home run is just an event. It is simply something that happened. You made it happen, and you owe yourself credit for preparing yourself to achieve that outcome. However, in the grand scheme of things, your home run was just a thing, it does not define you as a person.

Failures do not define you either. If you are unsuccessful or late in accomplishing some proposed task, that is simply an outcome. It does not mean you are a failure, it only means that you failed this one time. After any failure, large or small, look back at the process you undertook that led to that outcome. You may see that you can approach similar tasks or responsibilities differently in the future, to give you a better chance at success.

You should learn from your failures, but you should not embrace them as definers of your character. Learn to forgive yourself when you procrastinate. Don't say, "I know I should have started earlier." Don't tell yourself, "I always do this. I always procrastinate. I am such a loser." Life is too short and the rewards of living a fulfilling life too great to embrace the idea that you are a failure. Forgive yourself and move on.

Action Steps

Don't procrastinate. Take action today to get more done and enjoy more productivity and less stress. Procrastination kills productivity, robs you of free time, ramps up stress, ruins relationships and has you resenting yourself because you can never seem to get anything done. Enrich your life today in so many ways by acting upon the procrastination-crushing tips and best practices in this report.

You may find your physical health improves right alongside your mental health and peace of mind. This is because mental stress which comes from putting things off can lead to physical health problems. For so many reasons it makes sense to face your procrastinating habits so you can enjoy a healthier and happier life with more productivity and fewer failed attempts at reaching the important goals in your life.



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