

Ten ultimate tips to fight procrastination



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I must admit, I have been cheating on you. I am not going to tell you how to fight procrastination because I don't think one can fight it. Instead, I will give you some tips on how to make friends with your procrastination and benefit from it.

Procrastination is not a disease, but merely a symptom that something in your life is not working the way you think it should work. Procrastination is trying to help you live a happier life.

Following this guide, you will learn to make friends with your procrastination. The great thing is, you don't have to follow all these tips. Just pick one that you like the most. If you implement it in your life, you will still make a huge step forwards.

1. Get to know your procrastination

How do you procrastinate? What exactly do you do and how often/how long for? Watch your procrastination for one week **without making any judgment about it**. There are different online programs that allow you to track how you spend your time online, such as Rescue Time, otherwise just write down everything you do in a diary.

Got again into watching Youtube videos? Notice when it happened and what thought or action caused it. Browsing through your mobile pics for the tenth time today? Just notice and write it down.

You may discover that you think about procrastination more than you do it. We often believe that we procrastinate much more than we actually do, and treat ourselves badly for no reason. Be curious and not judgmental, as if you were a scientist who is observing a new tribe.

2. Ask yourself: what's wrong? What's really keeping me from doing things I need to do? Spend time listening to whatever comes up.

The answer might be ridiculously simple. I knew a person, a very accomplished psychology researcher and the youngest recognized specialist in his field in the country, who wouldn't start writing his PhD thesis for two years. He literally couldn't sit down and start writing it! That's until he asked himself why he kept procrastinating and found that he totally hated the table and chair he was working at! After he realized that and got himself a nice desk and an armchair, nothing else was holding him back and he completed his thesis in no time.

So check with yourself, what is really bothering you. Perhaps it's not as bad as you think and can be resolved fairly easy.

3. Be honest with yourself

Do you really want to do something or do you believe you need to do it because others think so? What is really important for you? ***Sometimes resistance to the opinion of others shows up as procrastination.***

I have recently worked with a person who needed to decide on whether to accept a seemingly lucrative job offer and move from one country to the other with his family. Everyone around thought it was good enough and he should move. In spite of the pressure from the company, he kept postponing his final answer week after week. When we got into what mattered most for him, it turned out that he was driven by the future of his child, but wasn't sure whether he'd be able to provide good education and give his child many life possibilities had he accepted the offer. During our conversation, he realized that he was lacking information about local schools, and spent the next week researching and talking to parents who already lived in the area. After his research, he decided not to move unless he would get a better job offer as he realized that he wouldn't be able to give his child the education he wished for.

His procrastination was doing him a good service of inviting him to do more research.

4. Procrastinate consciously

I keep repeating this to every client complaining about the procrastination. Procrastination is your friend and it's telling you that you are missing out on something very important to you. Your task is to make it conscious.

What we resist, persists. What we allow, disappears. If you don't do it, chances are your brain will still find a way to distract you from work, but you won't be pleased with a result. Has it happened to you that you spent hours on Facebook instead of working or doing what you wanted to do? You were neither productive nor happy. That's exactly what happens when you try to fool your mind – it fools you.

So stop beating yourself for procrastinating and allow it to happen, consciously. Tell yourself: for the next 15 minutes, I am just going to lie down on the couch and look at the ceiling. Keep yourself consciously resting for 15 minutes and doing nothing else. You will be surprised how fast you'll want to get back to your business.

5. Don't try to eat the whole elephant, cut it into pieces

When you have a huge task in front of you, chances are you'll feel tempted to give it up without even starting. ***Spend some time on breaking it into smaller parts and get a sense of how much time each part would take.*** It gives you a sense of clarity and control over what you'll be doing.

Let me give you an example from my practice. Say that in order to promote my coaching business, I want to schedule free trial sessions with 100 clients in one month. By the way, the number 100 is not random, it's after you've reached this quantity that something shifts in how you do your marketing and you become an expert. This is seriously ambitious and somewhat scary, too.

Now, 100 clients per month means roughly 3 clients per day. Say, my conversion rate is 50% (i.e. every second person I talk to will be willing to accept my offer of a free coaching sample session). So I need to reach out to 6 people per day to hit my target.

How can I do that? Probably I could call a few friends and ask them if they know anyone who might benefit from the offer? Perhaps I could post in a few community groups on Facebook or LinkedIn targeting people who are my target audience. All that will probably take about an hour of my time per day. Whew, what a relief. Now that I am thinking in terms of time (only one hour) and a minimum number of people (six), I am much more likely to start working on it.

6. Do one thing at a time. Start the next one only once you've accomplished the previous one.

We often procrastinate when we have no feeling of accomplishment. It's especially true when you are trying to do a lot of things simultaneously and get caught in the routine.

Set yourself a clear goal and timing under one hour: say, for the next 40 minutes I will be working on writing a blog post for my website, and will not allow myself to be distracted by phone calls, colleague requests or checking emails. Get one task or its portion to the end, and only then get to the new one.

Forty minutes is the maximum time an adult human being can get totally focused on one task, so don't plan for more. It also creates an urge to actually finish something.

7. Check your health

Sometimes procrastination might be a symptom of a health-related issue or even a mild depression. Procrastination and laziness is the ultimate way of our body to save some energy. If you have been in a stressful situation for a long time or your energy has been constantly depleted one way or another, you simply won't have enough resources and your body will demand for some rest through procrastination.

So in a heavy case of procrastination (especially if it showed up recently and has never been typical for you in the past) go and take a blood test for vitamins (especially iron and vitamin D) and hormones to make sure that procrastination is not covering something more serious.

8. Do some sports or just keep moving your body

If everything is well with your health (fingers crossed), get yourself moving! Sports is always a great way to boost your energy, but if you don't feel like doing serious exercise, simply make a few steps or stretches once you start procrastinating. Walk around the room, jump or dance to one song. Shake your arms, legs and head.

Procrastination appears when stuck energy accumulates. If you want to get yourself out of this state, the fastest way is to introduce some dynamic into your body.

9. Ask yourself 'What if I don't do it?' or 'What if I could do it differently?'

Sometimes procrastination comes up when a certain thing is important to you, but the way you've chosen to accomplish it doesn't resonate with your personality or your body. For instance, if you know you need to be physically active, and keep convincing yourself to go to the gym, but deep inside you really hate it, chances are you'll be highly procrastinating. But what if I told you that you don't have to go to the gym, never ever. What a relief, eh?

What would you like to do instead to keep fit? Many of my clients said they've always been curious about tennis/water polo/dancing, but never thought they could do that. So here's the deal – **go after your curiosity, not after your procrastination**. If you hate something, don't try to make yourself love it. Instead, go for something you could potentially love to do (but might have not given it a chance yet).

10. Get some accountability

If procrastination got so deeply into your habit that you don't have enough internal resources to overcome it, consider asking for external help.

The best way to do it is to tell 3-4 people you respect and trust that you are going to do something by a certain date, and ask them to enquire how things are in case you don't. When we promise something to the others, we are much more likely to do it compared to when we are the only ones who know about it.

This is it, folks.

Now stop procrastinating over reading this document and go make friends with yourself.

Remember what we've said in the beginning - you don't have to follow all these tips. Just pick one that resonates most with you, and try it. Are you enjoying it and having fun?

If so, you are likely to become more productive. When people start asking you what changed, tell them about this guide so they can make friends with their procrastination, too.



With love, Anastasia