

Procrastination Slowing You Down? By Helen Kornblum, MA

If your To Do list seems to hang around forever with unfinished items, you may need some reminders about dealing with procrastination. All of us procrastinate sometimes, but when avoiding tasks becomes your way of living, you'll want to find some help.

1. If procrastination has become a habit for you, remind yourself that habits can be changed. People stop smoking, lose weight, and improve parenting skills by learning new, productive behaviors. What's your mindset about getting things done? Forget your reputation for putting things off. Quiet those negative voices in your head. Remind yourself of other difficult tasks that you tackled and succeeded at. Be your own cheerleader.
2. Confront the fears that hold you back, especially those that thwart decision making. Perfectionists are afraid of being judged by the final product, although ironically they are their own harshest critics. Maybe it's time for a reality check about who is really judging you.
3. What are your goals? Does taking action bring you closer to achieving those goals? If you want a promotion at work, finishing a report on time will help you. A positive spin on the benefits of doing something can motivate you more than thinking, for example, that you'll be fired if you don't get the report done on time.
4. You don't have enough information to make a decision? Okay, that's a valid concern, so get yourself the data you need—quickly. Don't inundate yourself with information or you'll create a stalling technique. Use instinct, prior knowledge, and a limited view of the latest thinking to take action. The prolonged agony of indecision is worse than dealing with the consequences of any decision you make.
5. If you really don't want to do something, look for a way out. Can you delegate it, trade it, or hire it out? You don't have to do everything and some things, after you consider them carefully, may not be worth doing in the first place.

A good technique for dealing with procrastination involves visualization, which athletes use to ensure their success. There's no perfect moment to start a project, but every moment is good for visualizing yourself making a plan, grouping tasks in a manageable schedule, assembling the tools you need, and then moving toward the goal. Imagine yourself completing and succeeded and you will have made progress in your stand against procrastination.

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