

Undoing Procrastination

By Scott Goolsby

Regardless of profession, background, or education level, procrastination can be a serious problem that strains personal, professional and family life. Thankfully, it doesn't need to have such power and I will share with you six helpful tips in finding the motivation and confidence to manage your various projects and tasks.

1. Assess your values. Clearly identify what the task or project is and why you are doing it. What are you working towards? What will you get out of it? How is this connected to your passions and governing values? What's driving you?

Perhaps you're working on a report for a course. You may initially tell yourself that you are doing it only because the teacher or professor assigned it. But why are you in school or college? Is it because you believe it will lead you to a better life? Is it because you genuinely enjoy your course of study but this once class is just not your forte? Instead of focusing on doing the report simply because it was assigned, you can look at the situation in light of it supporting your higher value of furthering your education.

2. Reframe and get rid of Should, Must, Need to, and Have to. Telling yourself that you should/must/have to/need to do something takes the task out of your hands. It does not leave you in a place of choice or power. If you tell yourself that you want to or get to do a project because you're excited about it or because it is in alignment with your passions and values, then you will be much more motivated.

3. Set Boundaries with Others and Yourself. Tell people that you are busy and cannot be social until you have the goal completed. Turn off your phone. Make sure your workspace is clear, comfortable and as free of distraction as possible. Set up regular times to do your work and stick to them.

The computer can be our most useful tool and our worst enemy. Set boundaries for yourself with it as well. Disable things like instant messaging, new email notifications, and the web browser and use them only during break times.

4. Define Actions versus Projects. The lack of clarity between actions and projects can be one of the biggest causes of procrastination. If you don't narrow your projects down into action steps, then your tasks remain amorphous and overpowering. An actionable item consists of a single task. A project consists of several actionable tasks that must be defined and fulfilled in order for the project to be completed.

5. Work with Positive Associations. Surround yourself with things you find pleasing but aren't distracting. Incorporate your 5 senses and use things that you positively associate with your work.

6. Breaks. Be sure to take regular breaks. This will keep you from getting tired or burnt out, and give you time to clear your mind to think of fresh ideas and new approaches.