



### Are You a “Procrastinator”?

*Is procrastination an issue for you? Only you get to say. If so, are you ready to do something about it? If not, throw this away.*

Procrastination is a highly personal phenomenon. It is only a problem when you identify it as one. Procrastination, or “needless postponement or delay,” often leads to self-criticism and feelings of guilt or inadequacy. It may also have adverse effects on relationships, if trust is damaged, and on business viability, if critical actions are not completed in a timely manner.

If you are a procrastinator, you may be tempted to think of procrastination as a character flaw and to decide that there’s something wrong with YOU because you put things off. We invite you to consider another approach: Perhaps you have not yet designed an environment that supports you in being effective.

#### **What Supports “Now,” Not “Later”?**

There may be any number of reasons why you postpone taking an action. Here are a few possibilities:

1. It looks too hard, or you have no idea how to go about it.
2. You aren’t completely certain that you’ll get the result you want.
3. The action doesn’t seem important to you.
4. It’s really a “good idea” rather than something you have a commitment to completing.
5. You fear failure, or even fear success.
6. You are waiting until you have time to accomplish an entire project or large task, all at once.

These are all completely natural, but not inevitable,

responses to being confronted with something to be done. Each and all of them can be addressed by designing an environment for accomplishment.

In this context, your “environment” includes more than your physical work space (as important as that is to your effectiveness). It also includes less tangible aspects of the world surrounding you, including your vision, your relationships, your habits or practices and even your own self-talk. In less noticeable ways, each of these aspects “comes at us” and shapes how we see and experience the world. Consequently, alterations in any of these aspects can have a profound impact on the actions we take and results we produce.

#### **What Is Missing in Your Environment?**

Imagine an action you have been meaning to take for a long time and have not gotten around to completing. Now,

imagine yourself taking that action promptly and effortlessly, and answer the question, “What factors contributed to my success?” By explaining to yourself what supported the result, you identify the elements needed in YOUR environment to empower you to succeed.

Don’t neglect the obvious factors. For example, your explanations may include:

- I realized that getting this over with would give me an incredible sense of relief and even freedom! (In other words, I created an inspiring vision for a new future.)
- I realized that this action is one that makes a difference and it is important to me to take it. (I distinguished between actions I’m really committed to taking and those that are really only “good ideas.”)
- I decided that it was OK not to do it perfectly, and gave myself permission to simply do my best. (I found the confidence to dive in.)
- I found a sounding board in my coworker, boss, spouse or friend and figured out how to do what needed to be done and what my next steps were. (I asked for support.)
- I broke the job into smaller pieces, and was able to tackle each one in turn without feeling daunted or overwhelmed.

These are but a few examples. The explanation of YOUR success is unique to you and will involve discovering the factors that make a difference to you in overcoming inertia and taking the actions you really mean to take.

### **Practices for Being Proactive**

As a general rule, certain practices can support you in eliminating unwanted procrastination. We invite you to incorporate these practices (and the new ways of thinking they represent) to the extent that they contribute to you:

1. Before agreeing to take any particular action, be clear for yourself that you choose it — that it is an action that is wanted and needed, and that you are in fact the right person to make it happen. Eliminate “should” and say “no” when appropriate. If you agree to do something, schedule yourself to do it.
2. Get clear what it will take to accomplish this action. How much time will you allow? Are specific resources needed?
3. Consider breaking some tasks into smaller, “bite-sized” pieces and scheduling them separately. List actions to take in increments that take one hour or less to complete.
4. When you complete an action, celebrate your accom-

plishment at least briefly. The momentary pat on the back reinforces your sense of self worth and your confidence in your ability to do this again. Especially, take time to savor the fulfillment and freedom that comes with completion and accomplishment. This is an experience to which you want to become addicted!

5. If you get stuck, get support.
6. Above all, never focus on getting “caught up.” Keep all tasks scheduled in the future. If you have missed a deadline, make a new one. If you have broken a promise, make a new one. Because you can never win at completing something by last Friday, “being behind” is one of the most disempowering places to be.

### **Final Note**

In this area, as with other aspects of authoring your life, we invite you to remember that there is nothing wrong with you. You are where you are, on your journey to being who and where you want to be. There IS a way through. Your next job is to discover the pathways to success that work for YOU. We wish you extraordinary, unprecedented, miraculous success.

## *Nonprofit Notes*

We're publishing a new newsletter — *Nonprofit Notes*, a newsletter dedicated to supporting an environment of excellence in the ***nonprofit community***. Our purpose is to create a forum for examining issues related to individual and organizational effectiveness.

Our commitment is to provide information, approaches and methodologies that make a difference in an organization's (the staff's) ability to be effective and successful in fulfilling the mission and objectives.

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