
Procrastination

Self-motivation is essential for success. When self-motivation does not push us toward accomplishment, outside influences have a tendency to pull us toward mediocrity. Procrastination is consistently failing to do the things you need to do in a timely manner, which leads to deflated self-motivation. Why do we procrastinate? Why do

we unnecessarily put off doing something that we have decided in advance is important? Here are the three top reasons people procrastinate:

Laziness

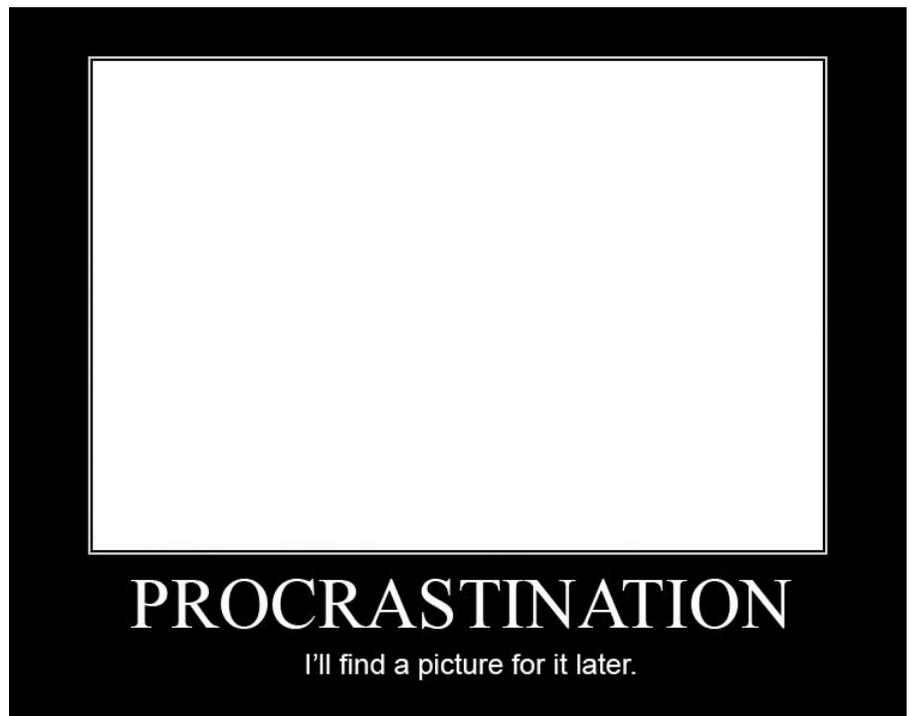
Sometimes we don't do things we know we should do because we simply don't like doing them. Maybe they're unpleasant or take more effort than we care to expend. If you fall into this trap, use your goals program to focus on and remind yourself of the rewards you anticipate receiving by achieving your goals. When you're pursuing goals you believe in, you'll be too excited and motivated to be lazy.

Apathy

If you catch yourself procrastinating, ask yourself whether you truly desire to achieve the goal in question. Maybe your lack of enthusiasm is telling you that you need to reevaluate your direction.

Fear

The largest cause of procrastination is typically fear. Understanding the nature of fear can help you overcome it, and one of the most common types is fear of the unknown. If fear of the unknown immobilizes you, don't imitate an ostrich and stick your head in the sand. Use your goal setting



process to reduce your fear. Identify all of the obstacles that stand between where you are now and where you want to be, and list them in your Goal Planning Sheets. Then develop solutions to overcome them. Fears immediately begin to subside when you turn the unknowns into knowns.

Fear of failure is another common fear that has a tendency to hold us back. All worthwhile goals pose the risk of failure. Realistically high goals, the only kind that are meaningful and useful, lie somewhere beyond what you know for certain you can accomplish. Failure is a necessary component of progress. If you reach for a worthwhile goal, you might fail. But if you don't try at all, you have truly failed.

It's virtually impossible to grow and achieve without failing at times along the way. But failure during your journey does not constitute the failure of your journey. Successful people often try, fail, try again, fail again, and try again before they succeed. They view failure as an essential part of the learning process on the path to their ultimate destination.

Adults tend to lose perspective on failure. We forget how many times as children we failed to tie our shoes before we succeeded. We forget how many times we fell before we learned to walk, skate, ski, or ride a bike. When you stop failing, you stop learning. If you struggle with fear of failure, examine the cause. Is there an issue of pride? Are you afraid of what others might think if you fail? Were you criticized so severely as a child when you made mistakes that as an adult you're afraid to take risks? Understanding the source of your fear will help you overcome it.

Rather than face possible rejection, some people simply don't ask for what they need. Rather than face possible criticism, they conceal their true abilities and never display their full potential. Every successful salesperson must ask for the order. Every successful business owner has to ask for financing. Every elected official must ask for votes. In order to attain our dreams and goals, no matter what they are, we must invariably ask others for their support, participation, assistance, or commitment. And every time we ask, we face the possibility of rejection.

If you struggle with the fear of rejection, also examine its source. Do you depend on the approval of others for your self-worth? People who have a strong need for approval and social acceptance often suffer from fear of rejection. To avoid criticism, they go to great lengths to adapt their appearance, behaviors, and values to what they perceive to be popular notions and acceptable



norms. They don't want to rock the boat. But if the boat isn't rocking, it's probably not moving. Fear of criticism robs conformers of the very uniqueness, creativity, initiative, and passion that foster success.

Often a combination of all three of the above fears causes procrastination. So, in addition to the suggestions for overcoming fears that we've already mentioned, here are three more helpful facts to keep in mind.

1. Fears are common. Everyone experiences fear at some time or other.

Do not judge yourself harshly if you are afraid. Your fear indicates that you're stretching yourself, which is a good thing. Don't shrink from your fears or wallow in them; confront the situations and people you fear. Use the adrenaline they produce to motivate you to action. When you exercise control over fears, you are exercising one of your greatest personal powers ... the power to choose!

2. Fears are often unfounded.

We typically believe that the object of our fear can do more harm to us than it actually can. President Roosevelt's famous words, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," accurately describes most situations. Examine the source of your fear and consider the worst that could happen if it became a reality. Then, plan how you will minimize the risk and potential damage.

3. Fears are thoughts.

You have tremendous power to control your thoughts. Replace fearful thinking with positive thinking. Saturate your mind with your dreams, goals, and values. Remember that confronting fear is a sign of progress and a valuable learning experience. Every time you overcome a fear, you strengthen your ability to overcome future fears.

Of all the days of the week, there isn't one called 'someday'. Whether your reason for procrastination is laziness, apathy, or fear, using written goals will help you overcome the most most debilitating obstacles and pave the way to accomplishing more, more often!

