



Beating Procrastination

A Quiet the Hive Career Confidence Worksheet



This is a Career Confidence worksheet, designed to accompany the Beating Procrastination Session.

In the session, we talk about the different categories of procrastination, why we do it, why it doesn't make us bad people, and how to tackle it and move on. This worksheet gives you the prompts and space to plan your next steps around this to take your thinking deeper.

Why not read through to remind yourself of the categories and decide which of the methods you are going to try next time procrastination strikes!

Let me know how you get on,

Jane x





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BEATING PROCRASTINATION

WHAT IS 'PROCRASTINATION'?

Hands up anyone who has done anything else rather than the thing they are actually supposed to be doing. (My hand is so high up in the air...). Ever had a sudden urge to change all the bedding in the house when you should be finishing a piece of work? Rather clean the kitchen cupboards than do your finances? Suddenly get the urge to pull on your trainers when you're supposed to be pulling on the marigolds and cleaning? THAT is procrastination. It's the overwhelming urge to do anything rather than the thing you're supposed to be doing, putting off that which we feel we should/ need/ have to do.

WHY DO WE PROCRASTINATE?

We procrastinate for all sorts of reasons. Here are some of the biggies:

- It's too huge a task (or I don't know where to start).
- I simply don't want to do it.
- I'm scared to do it (I might fail).
- I just don't have enough time.

Procrastination can become a habit. It can be a reward in itself. By choosing not to do the thing you ought/ need/ should/ have to do, you may feel a sense of relief. So you associate putting off the task with a good feeling (the relief) therefore negatively reinforcing the behaviour. If you can associate doing the task with a good feeling (rather than associating 'putting it off' with the good behaviour), then you are less likely to procrastinate in the future. When you do a task, take time to notice the feeling that it gives you after completing it (or even beginning to tackle it) so that you start to equate doing a task with a sense of satisfaction, therefore turning it into positive reinforcement and making you more likely to want to do it than to put it off.



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WHO PROCRASTINATES?

Everyone procrastinates at some time, and 20% of us are chronic procrastinators, so you are certainly not alone. It's neither unusual nor anything to be worried about. However, continued procrastination can lead to insomnia (as your to-do list keeps you up at night), immune and gastro imbalances, feelings of guilt, and even disruptions to workplace and home relationships.

There are some handy hints and tips for getting around, over or through procrastination. Some will work better for you than others, and none of them are a passive cure-all, but put in the commitment and they will pay off.

IS IT ALWAYS A BAD THING?

When we say 'procrastination' we associate it with negative feelings and thoughts; it already makes us feel guilty. Try reframing it. Instead of calling yourself a 'procrastinator' think about it as 'putting off doing something'. Sometimes, there might be a really good reason for delay - for example, we can't complete a task until we find out more about it.

When we are juggling a lot, it can feel like we are failing at it all, but remember you can't give 100% of your time and energy to 100% of things 100% of the time.

Think about something you're currently putting off. What might be getting in your way? Be honest about the reasons; are they legitimate 'It's not possible yet...' reasons, or do they fall under the categories on the previous page?



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HOW CAN I GET PAST PROCRASTINATION?

Steven Pressfield in his book *The War of Art* talks about the idea of procrastination actually being resistance.

Procrastination is the most common manifestation of resistance because it's the easiest to rationalise. We don't tell ourselves "I'm never going to write my symphony." Instead we say, "I am going to write my symphony; I'm just going to start tomorrow". The most pernicious aspect of procrastination is that it can become a habit. We don't just put off our lives today; we put them off till our deathbed".

I'm going to offer you a number of tools, ideas, and food for thought in this worksheet. However, I can't make you do the work; only you can do that. In order to do it, you have to get past the resistance. Spend some time really feeling into what's stopping you. Only then can you figure out what's getting in the way, and which tool might work best for you to get beyond it.

The worksheet is broken down by the categories listed above, but you can dip in and out of the tools as you wish, and they will often be applicable for more than one category. Extra resources are also included for you at the end of the worksheet if you get interested in the ideas used here and want to know more.

First steps:

- 1) Get clear on your purpose. **THIS IS VITAL.** If you don't know your 'why' the thing you are trying to get done will never have any real point for you, making it so much harder to do.
- 2) Know your priorities.
- 3) Prioritise.

When you have a to-do list, and you're not sure where to start, use a tool like this to get clear.

Need to do Want to do	Need to do Don't want to do
Don't need to do Want to do	Don't need to do Don't want to do



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WHEN... IT'S TOO HUGE A TASK (OR I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START)

We've all experienced those mammoth tasks where you just don't know where to start; even thinking about it can give you a headache. So, here is what I recommend.

1) Break it down

Take the advice of my great friend, psychologist Dr Gemma Munro and have "eagle vision with mouse steps". When something is too big, we can't ever imagine accomplishing it. So make it smaller. What are the next three small things you can do related to this task? This is how the premise of Three Things Sunday works (join me over on [Instagram](#) every Sunday for that one). By picking three small steps that move us closer to our main aims and goals, you'll find it less daunting and be surprised at the way it provides forward movement, a sense of accomplishment and an unthreatening way to get closer to the end result. Sometimes the act of starting (even with something small) can unlock the key to beating procrastination.

2) Are you focussing on too many things?

In his book, *Essentialism*, Greg McKeown explores the impact of essentialism (ensuring that your time and energy is spent focussing on the things that matter) on one's ability to get things done.

"Essentialism is not about how to get more things done; it's about how to get the right things done...it's about making the wisest possible investment of your time and energy in order to operate at your highest point of contribution by doing only what is essential."

When a task feels overwhelming, it may be that there is simply too much on your to-do list. Are you saying 'yes' to too many people? too many activities? As Derek Sivers says in his TED talk "it's either a HELL YEAH! or a no".

3) Ask for help

Sometimes the not knowing where to start bit can be utterly paralyzing. Why not ask someone who's done something similar where they started? Or ask someone who you don't think would normally do a task like this where they would start. Get a different perspective. If you're really stuck, get some coaching. See also 'Just Start', below.



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WHEN... I SIMPLY DON'T WANT TO DO IT

Eugh. Those things that we all have to do and never want to do! Am I right?

Those of you who have completed my energy audit could try the Better it, Barter it, Bin it method on the things you don't want to do; but sometimes we have no choice.

In those times, here's what I'd recommend:

1) Just start

This comes from the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) teaching that motivation comes from the action, not the other way around. Set a timer for five minutes, and do the thing for that long. By the time your timer beeps, you might find that you are starting to get into the flow of things, and want to continue. And, if you don't, you're five minutes closer to having completed the task. Don't forget to book in the next five minute slot before though!

2) Use Pomodores

This is an amazingly useful tool and I always accomplish much more than I thought I would when I use it (particularly on things I don't want to do or can't find the motivation for).

- Decide on the thing(s) you need to do. Have everything you need to start close by.
- Remove distractions (mute your phone, stick your headphones on, whatever you need)
- Set a timer for 25 minutes (this why it is called Pomodores, Francesco Cirillo who came up with the method in the 1980s used a kitchen timer shaped like a tomato)
- Do the task until the timer goes off, then give yourself a 5 minute break to remove yourself and do something completely different (or nothing if you like!)
- Do 3 complete pomodores, and then give yourself a longer break (20-30 mins)
- Repeat

3) Don't do it

Do you have to do it? What would happen if you didn't do it? If it falls into the don't want to do it/ don't need to do it block (see page 3), then just don't. Cross it off. forget about it. If it still bothers you after making that decision, then it might be because you do actually have to do it to move on. What is the right course of action? Only you can decide this.



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WHEN...I'M SCARED (I MIGHT FAIL)

"Do not call procrastination laziness. Call it fear." Julia Cameron

1) "I give you permission to write a shitty first draft"

In her book, *Bird by Bird*, writer Anne Lamott talks about the need to write a "shitty first draft" in order to get to something more polished. This is the same for us all. When fear of getting something wrong stops us from doing anything, we get in our own way. Try embracing a first stab at something by giving yourself permission for it not to be perfect.

2) Lean into the fear

Fear can be an indicator that we are onto the right thing. Tara Mohr talks about the difference between Pachad (fear of something that we worry might happen) and Yirah (the fear we get when we are inhabiting a space bigger than we're used to). Pachad is a survival instinct, but means we use time and energy worrying about something that MIGHT NEVER HAPPEN; we procrastinate and delay for no good reason. Yirah leads us to places that are thrillingly exciting; a place of growth. Learn to listen to what your body is telling you. If you feel it physically, the chances are it's a good fear. Lean into it.

3) Explore the 'so what'

So what if you fail? What's the worst that can happen? Answering that second question can often be the place where we get stuck; think beyond it. If the worst thing happened, what then? Thinking about some solutions to our worst fears can take away their power and unlock the ability to take action knowing that even our worst fears are surmountable.

Explore your 'what then' answers to your fears below.



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WHEN...I JUST DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME

We never have enough time, right? Wrong. It always feels like we don't have enough time, but this is where perhaps we can change our approach to time.

1) Work with your energy

Are you a lark, an owl or a hummingbird? We each have a chronotype which suggests the times and peaks at which we have energy (and are therefore more likely to be productive). Larks tend to sleep between 10pm - 6am (or earlier) and find it hard to sleep later. They tend to be at their most energised around noon and slump in the early afternoon. Owls, on the other hand stay awake past midnight and would wake late in the morning if they could; after 10am. They peak in productivity during the middle of the day and evening. Hummingbirds wake around 7am and retire around 11pm. They can stay productive during a 9-5, but slump in the early afternoon.

Once you know which you are, try and schedule the tasks requiring most brain power for when you have most energy. Work with your energy peaks. Schedule basic admin tasks for those times when you're more likely to have slumps. Block both your peaks and troughs out in your diary so you can control what you're using those times for.

Note below the times when you have most and least energy. How will you use those times? You may need to experiment a bit until you find your perfect combination. Use an energy journal to help you reflect on what you learn about your energy levels during your day, and help you to better plan how to use your peak time. Don't forget about your energy levels within your monthly cycle too. Consider tracking your energy levels during your monthly cycle (this can work for peri- and post-menopause too).

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Designed to get you results



Resources

Books / Articles

Eat That Frog - Brain Tracey

Atomic Habits - James Clear

Getting Things Done - David Allen

Essentialism - Greg McKeown

The Doorstep Mile - Alastair Humphreys

Solving The Procrastination Puzzle - Timothy Pychyl

Procrastinate Later - Bruce Wilson

Five Reasons You Might be Avoiding Work - Dena Domenicali-Rochelle

Podcasts

From Inside the Hive - The Beating

Procrastination Toolkit

10% Happier - Adam Grant on Perfectionism &
Procrastination

HBR - Three Strategies for Dealing with

Procrastination

Mel Robbins - The Only Way to Stop

Procrastinating

Very Well Mind - How to Stop Procrastinating

Videos

Mel Robbins ON - Why You Can't Stop

Procrastinating & How to Elimiate Self Doubt in
Five Seconds

How to Stop Procrastinating - Solving the
Procrastination Puzzle

The2-Minute Rules to Beat Procrastination

Mel Robbins - One of the Best Talks Ever on Self
Motivation

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