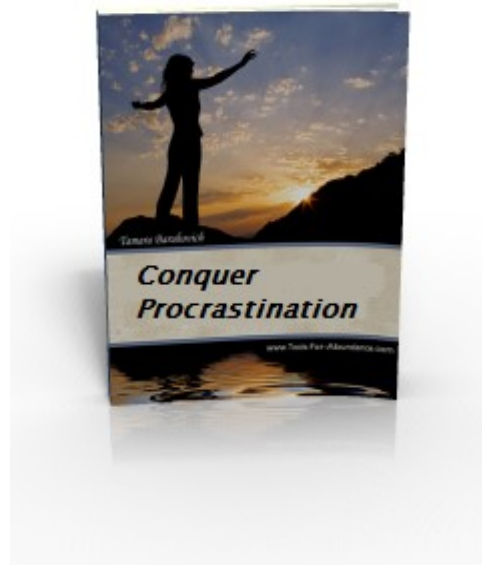


# CONQUER PROCRASTINATION



**Brought to You By...**

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**<http://www.Tools-For-Abundance.com>**

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# Introduction

“The principles always work if you work the principles”... You can find this quotation on “*The Success Principles*”, a book by Jack Canfield. This may sound too simplistic of a statement but it does translate into the wisdom of actually doing instead of just thinking of doing something.

And doing is a synonym of action, completing, implementing, executing or carrying out – all conveying the active mode as opposed to the passive mode of just thinking.

The human brain knows *no limits* when it comes to thinking out ways and strategies in dealing with all kinds of problems, but if these strategies and plans are NOT acted upon, they really hold no meaning – they’re like empty blueprints hidden away in volatile words. And empty speech comes cheap these days.

This is why I’ve decided to be less ambitious about this work. I will be making recommendations to simply stop procrastination as it happens, versus trying to stop it permanently in our lives, a much more difficult task.

It is human nature. Procrastination pervades every aspect of our lives. And we’ve learned to master it to perfection from the time we were born.

We used to delay falling asleep because our mothers wouldn't cradle us in her arms. We didn't do our homework because our teachers failed to state a precise deadline. We constantly procrastinate in performing our duties at home... who likes doing laundry anyhow?

We procrastinate at work even when we know we may get in trouble; and we even procrastinate in our most cherished human relationships. We get agitated when we think about the final tally of lost hours because we procrastinate habitually yet, we keep on doing it, don't we?

Some of the suggestions you'll find in this ebook may be useful and some others may not apply to you. Others may come in handy not necessarily right away but at a later stage of your life.

But one thing is for sure... Procrastination is an expensive habit. Just think of a time when you didn't do something that could have been profitable because of procrastination. How much do you think it cost you?

This relates to the generally accepted idea that time is money. This alone should serve as a strong motivator not to procrastinate again... or at least to try not to procrastinate!

“Life is like a combination lock; your job is to find the right numbers,  
in the right order, so you can have anything you want”

~ Brian Tracy

It would be false to assume that if you followed the advice given in this ebook you will stop procrastinating completely. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way.

The suggestions given here are ideas that have come from the minds of many people; ideas that have worked for others, so there is no reason why they shouldn't work for you. But it is up to you to apply them in every segment of your daily life.

It is easier to start avoiding procrastination by taking little steps than by wanting to get rid of it all at once. It is a process, yet it doesn't mean you'll have to change your life radically.

It's much more effective to get rid of procrastination as you build on small steps. The day will come in which you will be amazed at how much you have accomplished over time.

One point is very important though. Once you decide to stop procrastinating, you must be determined and plan clear cut and well defined goals.

Without knowing where you'll go, you never get there. In other words, you must have a goal that you can quantify and not just qualify. You have got to learn to set SMART goals.

S.M.A.R.T. goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time limited.

Here is an example. When you say "I want to lose weight" the goal is not specific or measurable, thus it'll be almost impossible to achieve. If you change that statement for something more powerful like "I will lose 35 pounds in 18 months" you'll have precise data you can work with. Do you follow me?

For detailed steps to set S.M.A.R.T. goals for everything you do in life, please see the Resource section at the end of this ebook.

I recommend you read the whole ebook in one sitting. It is a quick and light read. Once you do this, you'll be familiar with every section so you can go back to the precise segment you need when you find yourself procrastinating in that area. In just a few baby steps, you will know what to do and have a handle of the situation... what could be easier than that?

Let's move on...

# **It's Time to Evaluate Yourself**

## **It's All About the Self**

How would you react if someone said you are a procrastinator? Most likely, your immediate reaction would be to defend yourself and blame somebody else for your "not doing"... You've heard some of these claims... "It wasn't my fault, I really tried", "I didn't want to do it because...", "I thought it wasn't that important", "It can always be done later", etc. etc...

Some people are used to blame their misfortunes on others, but the truth is, they are the ones at fault. Something we must learn to admit is that we procrastinate because we choose to procrastinate. Yes, it is a choice. Not a conscious one perhaps, but a choice nevertheless. The sooner you accept that, the better you'll be able to overcome procrastination. And by having read this, you have taken the first baby step as you're becoming aware of this.

## ***It is True... I procrastinate and want to stop doing it***

In line with what's mentioned above, once you accept that procrastination is your weakness, the next step is to eliminate this weakness. Becoming aware of the situation always IS the very first step towards any change, procrastinating included. Your desire to stop procrastinating should come from a sincere standpoint.

You need to demonstrate your determination through small daily motions. We'll get to that further on.

## **The Big "R" Word... Responsibility**

So far, you've accepted the fact that you're a procrastinator. You also have a sincere desire to change this. Now acknowledge that if you have failed to achieve a particular goal or a given task, it's because you've procrastinated. Admitting guilt is a huge step.

It is essential to differentiate however, between admitting guilt and being too hard on yourself. Admitting guilt means taking ownership of your actions while being too hard on yourself is unjustified self-blame which will not help you achieve change.

## ***Self Reflection... In what ways do I procrastinate?***

Grab a pen and paper for this exercise. Ask yourself in what ways you procrastinate, what makes you procrastinate the most, what has happened when you decided just not to do a particular task?

Put down all that comes to mind, situations, events, and circumstances in which you found yourself procrastinating. This will help you identify these moments more clearly. Here are some situations where others often procrastinate:

- In paying bills
- Delaying discussions because of fear of hurting somebody's feelings
- Repeatedly postponing a doctor's appointment because of fear
- Not returning the call of your son's teacher because you know what the problem is and you're fed up
- Postponing a discussion about your partner spending too much
- Not getting the dress dry-cleaned, or that donation mailed out
- Not visiting a sick relative in the hospital
- Not telling your significant other you no longer love her/him
- Postponing your dental appointment because you have better things to do
- Not having the car's squeaking brakes checked
- Not sending that overdue thank you note
- Not submitting the report to your boss because "there is still time"

### ***Goals you didn't accomplished due to procrastination***

Did you finish your list about the several ways in which you procrastinate? Put it aside and now make a second list with the goals that you failed to achieve because of your procrastination. Here are some typical examples:

1. You promised your boss you'd get that report done by a certain due date. On the day the report is due, your boss calls you. You tell her awkwardly that you didn't have time to do it. You may end up saying something like, "My daughter was sick and I had to take her to the doctor" knowing that your boss was generous with the deadline.

What do you think would happen? First, you have taken away possibilities for growth within the company. Second, you're farther away from developing a good relationship with your boss who may just decide that your co-worker, John, may be a better alternative for the promotion. You can bet that your name has been taken off her "possible candidates for the promotion" list.

2. You delayed lobbying for your colleague's promotion even if he was the best man for the job. What are the results? First, the job went to someone less deserving. Second, your colleague resigned to take up another offer, and he's the one that bailed you out every time you procrastinated in the past!

### ***Analyze...***

#### ***What is the dollar value of a missed opportunity?***

When you realize the consequences of a missed opportunity because of your procrastinating, ask if the consequence was worth the delay. In our fast-paced society, time is as a precious and a valuable resource. You've most likely have heard expressions such as "time is of the essence", "time is money", "you missed the train", and "a window of opportunity" amongst others that reinforce the value of time.

Think about the wheelers and dealers in the stock exchange. If they take a couple of minutes to call their better half, those few minutes can mean hundreds, even thousands of dollars in missed transactions.

This is why you should install a permanent calculator in your brain and calculate how much that missed deal meant in terms of dollar value.

The report you didn't submit could have cost you your job... how much would you lose if you lost your job? Your colleague's resignation from the company wiped off an important asset from your human resources ledger. If we make it a practice to tag a dollar sign for each of our procrastinations, we'd probably resolve to procrastinate less or even conquer procrastination altogether.

### ***Do you need information in a hurry?***

It is amazing but do you know that we spend half our lives on the phone? Now think about the big chunk of time we spend looking for names and phone numbers. The directory is cumbersome. If you put them in your outlook means you have to re-boot your computer. Here's a neat trick: tear out sheets from your notepad and label each as *kitchen, bedroom and living room*.

Kitchen sheet - Jot down the following telephone numbers...

- Grocery Shop
- Butcher's
- Bakery and pastry shop
- Electronics and utensil stores
- Take-out pizza and other delivery shops

- Drug store
- Oriental grocery
- Kids school

Bedroom sheet – Jot down these numbers...

- Dry cleaner's
- Doctor and dentist
- Pediatrician
- Veterinarian
- Walk-in clinic
- Shoe repair shop
- Alteration shop
- Department store
- Catalog order stores, etc.

Living room sheet – jot down these numbers...

- Professional house cleaners
- Plant shop
- Local home shop
- Florist
- Bookstore
- Eyeglasses
- Airport

Keep these lists handy and updated at all times. Or if you prefer to use your cell phone's memory feature, just remember that they run out of battery too.

### ***Filters... Essential or Unimportant?***

Many people procrastinate because they feel overwhelmed. In today's fast-paced society, you may find yourself with way too much on your plate all at once. The easiest way to deal with this is to "forget" about it, which leads to procrastination. This will only bring more trouble as time passes and tasks accumulate.

Remember that the opposite of procrastination is action. However, if you decide to do something today and leave the other for tomorrow, procrastination is not a problem unless you don't take action. When you decide which of your tasks need immediate attention and which can be done at a later time, you're not procrastinating but prioritizing.

Prioritizing is an important element to overcome procrastination. You must decide at once which tasks are essential and which ones are unimportant, at least for the time being. When you assign priority to what matters the most and take action, you are on your way to conquer procrastination.

### ***The Power of Writing Priorities...***

When you get into the habit of jotting down your tasks and prioritize them, you're able to act logically, which is much more effective than just thinking how to avoid procrastinating on all of your tasks at once.

Putting down things in black and white is even better than brainstorming with another person. This is because you are the only one who knows what is important and what can wait.

You focus on one task at a time from implementation to completion. Once it's completed, you take it off your list or place a check mark by it before you move to priority #2. There's a sense of accomplishment, no matter how small the accomplishment is.

Then you go on to the next task, and the next, until you actually get used to the idea of doing, rather than procrastinating. And as you go and see your tasks completed, you will get a sense of self pride that will serve you as motivation to keep on moving forward.

When you brainstorm with a friend, on the other hand, may be good to get ideas on how to do something; however, it can be a form of procrastination as not matter how many "ideas" you get, you still have not started implementing any. You may say to yourself... "Joe's idea makes a lot of sense", so you consider other possibilities and leave the task undone for an undetermined amount of time.

Thinking about your tasks yourself and then doing them – without anyone's feedback, is a time saver and much more productive.

## ***Commit to Get Rid of Your Old Habits***

We humans, are creatures of habit. Even if we know that a certain activity is no longer cost effective, we continue doing it anyway. Silly, but true. Due to lack of time or commitment, we fail to look for alternatives.

Think about this... You use the same, familiar road to work every day. And then, one day you hear of a quicker and more relaxing route you can take. Do you go and find out what that other route is right away?

If you are like most of us, you will still drive down the old road for a long while before you consider exploring the alternative, even though it may mean less stress, and a time saver. And the longer you wait the more you procrastinate...

Even if you were not going to use the new found route, it's always a good idea to have alternative routes just in case traffic jams occur in times when you're in a hurry. Is it not?

## ***Mantras and Procrastination***

Once in awhile you deviate from your intentions. You're an imperfect human being like the rest of us. You have limitations, and once in awhile life, without warning, takes a detour, and we get derailed.

Let's take a lesson from our brothers and sisters in the east who live by mantras that they recite to themselves every day.

Here's one you can recite in the morning as you wake up: *"I will not procrastinate today. It is unproductive. I have tasks to do, and I will write them down so I can decide which of them need to be done by noon. My goal is to finish at least 2 big tasks and 2 small ones today"*

### ***One More Motivating Mantra***

Have a second mantra that you can recite after you complete a task. *"I completed my task! I focused well and didn't allow myself to procrastinate. This translates to about \$150.00 that I can take to the bank"*

Even if it sounds superficial to attach a monetary value to every task accomplished, your reinforcing the belief that time is money. And when you make a final tally, you'd be surprised at what you end up with.

Time can always be expressed as a savings or a loss. It's all up to you. And people don't have to know. After all, a mantra is something you keep to yourself!

## ***Two Steps Forward, One Step Back***

If you know you are a chronic procrastinator, you will experience problems staying on course for the first few weeks. It's like deciding to go to the gym for the first time. You're all ready for action for the first 3 days and then you stop.

We all know it... Old habits die hard. So if you missed doing the three tasks yesterday, no big deal as long as you stay committed to conquer procrastination in the long run.

Revise the list, and plan on doing them within a specific time frame. This is a good time to revise how to set S.M.A.R.T. goals... remember, the S in SMART is for specific and the T stands for time limited. Don't dwell too long on what you failed to do. Just realize you had a drawback and take action to overcome it.

Keep on climbing the stairs and get to the top without looking back. Aim for completing four tasks today - three from yesterday and one for today.

## **Procrastination at Home**

### ***Keeping it Simple***

Simplifying your life means a simpler, uncluttered way of living. Get rid of grit and gunk from your house.

When your house overflows with objects, it tends to distract you. And we all know what happens when there is too much distraction... It prevents you from thinking and acting intelligently, hence you procrastinate.

Also, if you have heard or believe in the ancient art of Feng Shui, you know that a cluttered space impedes the flow of positive energy. Makes total sense, doesn't it? Go around your house and make a list of everything you don't really need. For instance, do you really need two toasters in the kitchen? One hasn't been used for months. You either dispose of it or donate it.

### ***Ask Your Family for Help... Do an "Inventory"***

Ask your partner and children to do an inventory of clutter. He can do the garage and she can do the basement. Your children can do their bedrooms. Stipulate that you need their lists in three days, no later. Explain to them why junk has to be eliminated from the house.

If you explain your intentions clearly, they will understand and would be more than willing to cooperate. Tell them that the house needs a much needed airing, and when all the junk disappears, so will the distractions.

### ***Make an Agreement with Your Family...***

It can be a vicious cycle. Just as we managed to clear the house of unwanted junk, in comes new stuff.

Explain to your family that there was a specific reason for clearing useless items. Old clutter should not be replaced with new clutter. Make them agree to this. Encourage them to think twice before acquiring additional material possessions.

Here are a few examples...

- Will I consult this book more than once, or is it just for one school assignment? Maybe I can borrow it from the library instead?
- The hubby loves tools. He spends too much on them. He just filled up an entire wall with all kinds of hammers and screwdrivers. Ask him which ones he hasn't used for 6 months and ask him to throw them away.
- The wife loves shoes. She's got twenty five pairs of shoes in all colors and styles. Ask her which ones she hasn't worn for 6 months and ask her to get rid of them.
- The clothes in your closet. Which of them have you not worn for six months? Call the Salvation Army, the Goodwill or the recycling center.

As soon as the closet is half-full, and you can finally see the wall of your closet, you'll be inspired to re-organize your whole bedroom. Do the same with your dressers, and nightstand drawers. Then move to your kitchen cabinets and the kids' toys closets.

## **Your Budget and Procrastination**

Budgeting for house expenses is a chore people put off indefinitely. They know something is wrong with the budget; bills pile up and remain unpaid for weeks,

and the only time you jolt out of your complacency is when the utility company calls to advise you that power will be cut off in a week if you don't settle your bill.

Most of the times, it's not that you need to earn more, but your budget planning and allocation needs fixing. Decide to make your budget healthier. Realize that procrastinating will only make the problem worse. Think about this... if it's easy for governments to get into a deficit, it's even easier for individuals to fall in the same trap.

Buy a notepad to be used exclusively for budgeting and expenses. Start by getting into the habit of writing everything down; how much you spend, and how much you make. It doesn't matter if it's just a \$5 car-wash. Write it down! Start on day 1 of whatever month comes next and stick to this habit.

An easier way to do it is to save all receipts in a special bin. Then, once a week (or better yet, daily), jot down everything you have spent so far. As you get into the habit of doing this, start classifying your expenses in different categories, such as, utilities, gas, school supplies, groceries, etc.

You will eventually know exactly where your money is going every month, and do not be surprised to find out that a big chunk of it is going to unnecessary junk. This is also an excellent idea to start a savings plan, but that is a topic for another book.

## ***Identify Time Wasters***

Solicit the cooperation of the entire family and ask them to come up with potential sources of time wasters. Here are some ideas to explore...

- × Miscommunication
- × Misplaced objects and personal effects
- × Documents and papers not filed
- × Too many scattered old magazines and CDs
- × Mistakes
- × Indecision
- × Inefficient use of family vehicles
- × Too much TV viewing
- × Different meal times
- × Friends who hang around indefinitely

## ***Organize Your Family - Split and Delegate House Chores***

A family is like a business. For it to be successful, all must participate. Nobody can do it all. So it's time for a strategy. Get together with your family and tell them you have something to announce. Cook them a special meal and whip up a dessert that everyone loves.

At the end of the meal, tell them that you want to make some changes at home. Say that you've been procrastinating in doing some important chores around the house and that you need their help and support.

Bring up your split and delegate plan, ask them for suggestions, and get everyone's commitment. Your concrete, well laid-out plan will get you the results you want.

An example of this could be...

- Mom does the cooking
- Dad does the dishes
- Kid 1 picks up the family room
- Kid 2 brings the dirty clothes to the laundry room
- Hubby takes clothes to the cleaners once a week
- Mom picks them up

You get the idea!

### ***Set up a Chore Chart***

As the initiator of the plan, you must be the first to set the example. If you committed to re-organize the closets and clean out the fridge once a week, do it. When everyone sees you're doing your part, they'll be better at doing theirs.

Set up a chart in the kitchen or in the laundry room where everyone can cross out the task once it's completed. Check the chart once a week and make sure you tell them how pleased you are with the progress. If some members have been delinquent, ask them why.

Don't scold, give them another chance. This chart is an effective way for you to identify who the biggest procrastinators are, and you may need to supervise them more closely. It may take a few weeks to get them all going.

### ***Get Everyone's Cooperation with Small Tasks First***

Tasks should be given according to age and ability. Also, if a huge job is assigned the first time, that person may tend to procrastinate. You may consider dividing up the chore in small parts, especially for the younger ones.

Let's take re-painting the entire garage as an example. If the hubby works the usual 8 hours a day, don't expect him to paint the whole garage on one weekend. Think of the several smaller steps that need to happen before the big task gets done.

For instance, the old paint needs to come off, sanding of the walls may be needed, and primer must be applied. If you have a big garage, divide the job in smaller tasks easier to accomplish over a longer period of time. That way nobody feels overwhelmed or worse yet, resentful at having a bigger job assigned to them. This also forces people to think of excuses to put the job off.

### ***Procrastination and House Repair Bills***

There are certain things we always take for granted. If routine maintenance isn't exactly one of your favorite hobbies, motivate yourself by saying procrastinating can lead to major house repair bills.

Here's an example... the water heater was working fine until one cold winter morning where everyone started shouting "There's no hot water!"

Experts say that water heaters need to be checked once every two years. Deposits collect at the base of the heater over time, interrupting with the smooth operation of the heating coils. Why wait for it to break down, necessitating costly repair or replacement bills? Remember your notepad? Use a section of it to write down a check list of all of your appliances as well as when was the last time they got inspected. Visit the chapter often and ensure that your maintenance records are in order.

### ***Procrastination and Your Health***

Procrastinating leads to health problems because when we don't have the necessary ingredients to cook, we end up eating fast food often. Here is an example... Last weekend, you ordered pizza and cokes for the family because you didn't go to the grocery store, so there is nothing to cook.

You vow that from now on, your family will eat only healthy meals. You decide to shop for ingredients early in the week. The weekend's here and nothing was bought, because you kept putting it off.

### ***Procrastination and Your Backyard***

The backyard is one part of the house where everyone loves to spend nice summer evenings.

But spring arrives and no one dares to stay in the garden because it's unkempt. Someone's got to pick up the shovel and the pruners soon. Make sure you include the backyard in your list of tasks for next spring.

Remember to share the work. Let someone take care of the lawn, someone else take the flower beds, another member the fence, and so on. Make it a communal effort, and one that can be enjoyed versus a chore.

## **Procrastination in School**

This section is mainly written for a teenager. You can read it and share it with your teen or –better yet- have him read it to help him prevent or overcome procrastination. Of course, if you are a student yourself, it will help you too. For easier reading, I've referred to the teen in this chapter as a "he." Please substitute with "she" if you have a teen daughter or if you are a female.

### ***Treat Your Lesson Plans as Your Guide***

On the first day of school, professors customarily hand out lesson plans for the semester or the quarter, depending on what school system you're in. The lesson plans include the main textbooks to be used, supplementary reading material, project submission dates, and exam dates. Treat this lesson plan as your guide for avoiding procrastination. Academic procrastination can be disastrous if not reined in properly!

A good piece of advice is to get used to following guides and planning sooner rather than later. It will save a lot of headaches down the road.

### ***Identify the Short and Long Term Assignments***

Teachers can't afford to be procrastinators. They must be efficient from start. They schedule out assignments appropriately so they too are not overburdened with term papers and exam booklets. If they were overloaded, they'd have to procrastinate in tallying final grades, leaving that task at the last minute.

So professors mean business when they write "to be handed in by..." Use their lesson plans to arrange your own schedule. Take an hour or two and spend the time at the library reviewing all your lesson plans for the semester.

Map out dates with corresponding academic tasks, and revise them if necessary. If certain projects require extensive research, tackle those first. Last minute researching because of procrastination may affect your chances of getting an "A." Using a Student Timer or Daily Agenda to jot down all that you need to do is a habit that will pay big overtime.

### ***School is a Fun Place to Hang Out***

The #1 priority for teens is socializing, and if you are a teen reading this you'll agree. Teens prefer hanging out with their friends instead of with mom and dad; it's only natural therefore that some teens consider school as the extended party place.

And spending time with your friends is an excellent excuse for postponing school work or house chores. When you spend too much time in the corridors, locker rooms or cafeteria discussing next Saturday's dance, your academic work will lag behind.

To avoid the school principal calling your parents, let's get clear about responsibilities and academic work, as well as your need to hang out with friends and have fun. It's all natural and it's OK; however, know that a balanced life can offer greater rewards long term.

It should be a priority to submit papers and assignments on time. When you do that, you also have the time to be with friends and enjoy activities freely without the worry of overdue assignments. That is a balanced life.

To illustrate this, let's say that you have a paper due in two days. You've done the research but the essay has not been written. You should tell your friends that you cannot join them at the mall after school today, but will gladly do it in two days, once your essay has been turned in.

### ***School Counselors are Helpers***

Instead of agonizing over an academic problem indefinitely, consider that the school counselor could be a valuable support person for you. If you think you need a tutor for Physics or Chemistry because you are having a whirl of a time understanding fractions or equations, ask for help before it's too late.

Faced with academic difficulties, students tend to procrastinate in asking for help because they're either too shy or too lazy to ask for help. Some others don't even think about getting help. Take advantage of school resources like tutors and academic counselors before you get an "F" at the end of term.

### ***Teens, Boyfriends and Girlfriends***

If you have a boyfriend (or a girlfriend) in the same class, that's fine. Just have a friendly conversation with them and ask them not to get you distracted while in class so that your relationship doesn't interfere on academic work.

Don't let love make you procrastinate in completing assignments. If you notice you are spending too much time with your sweetheart and it's beginning to make you procrastinate in doing what the teachers and team leaders expect of you, arrange dates with your boyfriend ahead of time and commit to school responsibilities the rest of your time.

Strike a healthy balance. Succeeding in human relationships is just as hard as succeeding in school work. Besides, you don't want to end up blaming your sweetheart for your poor performance in Biology, do you?

### ***Procrastination and the Good Samaritan***

Another manifestation of procrastination is when you let others monopolize your time so they can pour out their hearts to you.

Being a good friend and a willing listener is one thing, but when you do this too often, it will make you procrastinate on your tasks and obligations. Assess your motives. Do you listen to their problems so you can avoid school work or your own problems? Don't use friendship or the Good Samaritan philosophy to procrastinate.

### ***An Ideal Student***

The ideal student not only excels in academic work, but also in sports and other extracurricular activities.

He's a member of the basketball team, the president of the science club, the chief debater on campus, the volunteer who offers his services twice a week to accompany seniors to their doctors' appointments. He's the all-around and wholesome American boy, the envy of all parents, the lad who makes the girls swoon all over.

Do you know how much pressure there is fulfilling all these roles? It has everything to do with image. How does he keep a healthy balance? He can't. That's the straight and honest answer. It's called STRETCHING YOURSELF TOO THIN. Often we forget that we're in school primarily for intellectual pursuits.

Sports and humanitarian work come in second. But the admission that you can't do it all is the first step in avoiding procrastination. Don't fall behind your school work because you're being pulled in all directions.

And don't use your extra activities in school as the excuse for your procrastination. No one is going to earn your diploma for you.

### ***Many Committees, Many Commitments***

This is just an extension of the paragraph above. School officials who have programs or personal agendas will form committees and request student volunteers to steer these committees.

It's a great way for them to let their students do the research work for their upcoming thesis, or get students to assist in that charity drive they do every year. As a student, you have to decide which committee will serve your goals best. And if you must get involved, then choose one, or a maximum of two committees, provided that you have time left to tackle your school work.

Don't let your committee commitments lead you to the path of procrastination. Always remember that your school work comes first. You'll have plenty of time for committee work when you leave university.

### ***Break that Huge Term Paper into More Manageable Goals***

If you dread term papers, take forever to finish them and you hate footnoting, you're not alone. Term paper phobia is as common as a fear of spiders or heights.

If you tend to put off doing term papers, one way of avoiding procrastination is to divide the project into smaller, more manageable goals. When you've set up the outline, pick out the sections you think are the most difficult and begin your research with those in mind. You can leave the easy parts for later.

Breaking a job into smaller segments is an effective way of taking immediate action instead of postponing it for later.

### ***Turn Your Cell Phone Off***

Do you realize how much time is wasted on the phone? If you are in school, never forget the reason you've got a cell phone. It is to call your parents if you find yourself in a bind or need a lift or simply need to let them know if you'll be late for dinner.

It's a good idea to keep the cell phone with you especially on those nights when you have to stay in the library till late at night. But don't use it to keep you from doing what you're supposed to do.

If you talk too much on your cell phone, you're not only using air time, you're using it to procrastinate from attending to that pressing academic project. Allocate 30 minutes during the day to stay in touch with friends, but try not to go beyond that time.

## ***Go to the Gym but Don't Overdo it***

Staying fit is important; no question about that. You need muscles and strength to keep you in shape for jogging from one classroom to another. Plus, the gym is a great way to unwind and...meet next Saturday night's date. Nothing wrong with toning those muscles, but have you procrastinated enough doing something for your brain as well?

The brain also needs to be stretched and maximized to earn that ticket to an Ivy League university later. Go ahead and shape up, but don't let your six pack abs get in the way of meaningful school work.

# **Procrastination and the Work Place**

## ***Your Job Description is Your Guide***

You got that much coveted job. It's tailored fit to your skills, talents and experience. The absolute perfect job, congratulations!

If you procrastinated in your prior job, it's time to get a clean slate so sit down and examine your job closely with a fine-toothed comb. Assess what the priorities might look like, and what the most difficult tasks will be, based on your past experience.

Then map out a navigation chart, with “avoid procrastinating” as your guiding principle. Use your prior experiences and imagine different situations that might occur, and the relationships you need to cultivate and nurture that will help you accomplish your objectives.

Study the short term goals versus the long term goals. Remember that companies measure your performance using certain parameters. One wrong move and it will obliterate all the good deed you did the month before. Don’t give them the satisfaction of labeling you a procrastinator.

### ***Sharpen Your Strong Sense of Smell***

If you’ve developed a strong sense of smell and have judged character with surprising accuracy, use that to your advantage. Try to distinguish the good colleagues from the back stabbers.

It’s easy to receive cooperation from the good ones, harder from the blockers or those who resent you. If hostile feelings are preventing you from doing an effective job, don’t procrastinate because you dislike confrontation.

Deal with the problem upfront. Try every trick in the book to win their confidence and trust. Help them not to procrastinate so that you don’t procrastinate.

## ***Procrastinating Can Lead to Tunnel Vision***

Don't get paralysis by analysis. When you analyze a lot, you stay stuck in analysis mode and this could lead to tunnel vision.

If you eliminate procrastination from your life, you avoid tunnel vision. As author Jane Smith said, "there is always more than one way to get to where you want to be. Make the effort to look for the alternatives even if they are hard to find at first." (*Successful Work Habits in a Week*, Hodder & Stoughton, 2002).

## ***Learn to Say No***

One thing is to try to win your colleagues' collaboration, but playing martyr is another. We all have the same amount of time in a day. When you just can't do something, say No. You must learn to say no, no matter how much you like or admire a colleague.

Don't see the office as the place for cementing friendships. Stick to your agenda and do the work. Keep your emotions and those of your colleagues at bay.

If a coworker is in trouble and you've helped her in the past, let her deal with it herself this time. Don't leave a task undone just so you can offer a helping hand to everyone. And do not feel guilty. Your time is valuable, use it wisely.

## ***Procrastination and Team Work***

You have a great team? Good for you. Use it to your advantage. If your team members are performing to your satisfaction, you have more confidence in delegating tasks to them, freeing up considerable time for you to attend to your important duties.

Knowing that you have a team you can rely on will make you procrastinate less. Delegate tasks based on each team member's strength and limitations; it's one of the more effective ways to obtain results. Then, use your "free" time to accomplish the next task in your agenda.

And if you have some problems with your team, is not the end of the world. This situation can be salvaged, but it's up to you to do damage control. Don't give up on your team members. It will take time to teach them leadership skills. Invest the time now rather than later.

It takes an exceptional leader to get everyone to cooperate and share the same vision. It's your job to make sure that the team produces for the overall good of the company.

An unhealthy team mired in hostility and aggression is the # 1 barrier to productivity. Many managers have procrastinated in doing their jobs because the team is divided, only to realize later on that several team members are procrastinating as well. And you know where this situation could lead...

Lacking support is the sure way to procrastination, and procrastination equals non-productivity. If you're busy putting out fires and mending hearts, you might be next in line before firing squad.

### ***This is "Urgent"***

Unless you're in the business of saving lives, then be wary of managers who say "it's urgent." You see this happening everyday in the office.

Workers are pushed to produce busloads of reports. How much of it gets read? A large company produces at least 100 different reports a day. Here is an example... A large company has at least five different reports on inventory: inventory of return merchandise, inventory of obsolete parts, inventory of parts on allocation, etc. And as the years pass, the inventory spreadsheets on inventory get larger and longer.

While it's good to sift through reports, it's also a sign of procrastination. Who said a company will fold up because managers don't devour the 101 reports a day? Get to the bottom line. Filter through the essential data and read those. Identify those tasks that are truly urgent. Discard the rest.

### ***Procrastination and Workplace Safety***

Government authorities are breathing down the necks of companies to implement work safety facilities and procedures. Companies must comply with regulations and must ensure the physical well-being of employees.

If you notice that there are potential causes of accidents in say, the parking lot (e.g. broken bottles, ice, large potholes, sluggish security gates and card readers) report it immediately to the appropriate department. Don't procrastinate. An accident may happen.

### ***Get to the Bottom of Things***

If your boss requests that you investigate an incident, do a thorough job, not a half-baked one. Use your detective skills so that you submit a full report giving all the facts and circumstances of the incident. And do it right away. By doing a thorough job the first time, you avoid having to do a re-investigation because there were questions from the boss you couldn't answer.

### ***Back-to-Back Meetings***

There must be something about board rooms and conference rooms that make people gravitate towards them. Is it the mahogany wood, the jelly croissants that are served every morning, the new projector, the cushy leather chairs? Meetings take up a lot of time.

Not that they're useless, but there are far too many meetings being held. If you take the number of man hours per day that are taken up by meetings, multiply that number by 5 days and then multiply that again by 50 (excluding Christmas and New Year).

Compare that figure to the company's annual generated revenues. If we took half of those man hours and made managers stay at their desks doing their work, imagine how much more revenues can be earned.

Don't doubt it - meetings are a great time to daydream and give in to our distractions. It's a "perfectly legitimate" excuse not to review last month's accounting expenses that are due soon.

Analyze the importance of your being at a meeting. If you have three projects on your desk, you may decide to skip the meeting (or ask to be dismissed).

### ***Voice mails and Nightmares***

If you have 25 voice mails and 48 unread messages... How much time would it take to go through all? Voice mails and e-mails take you away from your main functions.

Deal with the important ones and decide which ones can be dealt with this afternoon, tomorrow, and next week. And do file them away in a sub-folder so they don't take up visual space on your screen.

Some workers tend to answer each and every message they receive, since it's a great escape from the real task at hand. For non-urgent matters, devote 4:30 pm to 5:00 pm (when things begin to wind down) for answering non-urgent messages.

And never, ever give out your work e-mail address to your friends and family. You risk being inundated with the “joke of the day” messages that will get you distracted from your responsibilities. Open instead a free e-mail account for them, and check it out at home or in your free time.

### ***Are You a Morning Person?***

Fitness trainers ask people this question a lot because exercising at a specific time of the day is an effective method for maintaining discipline. The same applies to the office. If you’re a morning person, tackle your difficult responsibilities when you’re most energetic and productive before lunch.

Leave the less essential ones for another time. And then there are some people who like to work through their lunch hours because that’s when they reach peak energy levels; that way they leave the office early to have that extra hour to spend with family.

Analyze which type of person you are and plan accordingly for maximum efficiency.

### ***Do What You Hate Most First***

Nobody likes it all. There are certain aspects of our job we don’t like. But you need not let these unpleasant tasks derail you. If you make it a daily habit to tackle them first, they become easier for you to do and won’t be as unpleasant.

Get them out of the way as soon as possible and you'll have saved yourself precious minutes by not procrastinating.

### ***Favorite Time Wasters at the Office***

Do you know how much time is wasted when people go around collecting money and planning for things like birthdays and retirements? The actual celebration takes much less time. If you're the manager of a department, tone down on the merry-making. Birthdays are meant to be intimate celebrations, not a means to procrastinate. Sign memos instead of hordes of birthday cards. If you work at a large corporation, suggest one birthday lunch for all employees that have birthdays on that month.

### ***Procrastination and Positive Feedback***

We all thrive on positive feedback. A sincere compliment for a job well done is a strong motivator for employees to do even better next time. Do not procrastinate in treating your employees well. Be fair in granting salary increases. Promote an employee if he or she deserves it. Happy employees are good for the company's profit and loss statement.

Cy Charney wrote "*The Instant manager*" (American Management Association – AMACON, 2004). His thesis was on how to become an effective manager. One of his recommendations was to respect the time of your team members, just as they do yours.

Mr. Charney said, "Don't ask them to do things that others should be doing, unless it is an emergency. Don't continuously interrupt them unless absolutely necessary. Let them complete each task."

In other words, do not interfere with your employees or coworkers agenda. They will end up procrastinating and you may end up suffering the consequences.

### ***When Feeling Stuck, Ask for Help***

Instead of wasting time wracking your brain, be humble and approach a colleague even if she's a subordinate. Say, "I'm running out of ideas, can you brainstorm with me?" or "I can't solve this problem. Maybe you see something in it that I don't?"

Procrastinating in asking for help won't solve anything, but swallowing our pride can yield tremendous benefits. It makes your colleague feel good, and she can offer a fresh perspective on the problem. Be careful however, not to overdo this as a way to procrastinate yourself.

### ***Procrastinations and the Water Fountain***

If water fountains could record conversations between office workers, the tape and timer would probably run out. It's like a tower transmitter that emits data at many kilobytes per second.

If you were to “clock” workers who spend too much time by the water fountain or the coffee machine, it becomes apparent who the true procrastinators are. They should be at their desks dealing with the paper work or satisfying irate customers, but no, they avoid angry customers by quenching their thirst and turning it into some kind of art form.

### ***Office Cafeteria or Cruising Bar?***

There are days it doesn't look like an office cafeteria anymore; it has the air of a cruising bar – and not just on Fridays! Meeting who's who at the cafeteria is a daily sacred ritual so woe to the person who stands in the way of the socialization process.

“You need to reach out, interact with human beings, otherwise the company turns into an impersonal arena,” they say defiantly. OK, I get it. Socialize all you want, while that webcam conference is going on. It's only the CEO talking about freezing salaries and downsizing the work force. Linger in the cafeteria to make small talk is a glaring form of procrastinating. At least you got to agree to this one.

### ***Birthday Bashes and Christmas Parties***

If you pay close attention, some companies actually form committees for purposes of planning the annual Christmas employee party. Five to six members assigned to food and beverage, another three for the live band and perhaps one to four people to think of games and kiosks.

And OMG, let's not forget the gift exchange. The Christmas party is a whole movie production of sorts. And obviously an excellent reason to escape the drudgery of memos and customer calls and filling out return merchandise account forms. Procrastination at its most festive!

### ***Procrastination and Gossip***

The latest scoop is always the juiciest. In a large company of 5,000 employees, for instance, if you were to tally the number of lovers' quarrels, miscarriages, divorces, children on drugs, children who dropped out of school, cosmetic procedures done, who's wearing the latest hi-tech heart pacer and who got terminated, you'd probably come up with enough astonishing cases to write a book.

But there's no need to take pen and paper to tally up the figures because this is where word of mouth works best. The rumor mill has never been riper and... juicier.

If you try to camouflage your procrastination by pretending to be genuinely concerned about the gruesome details of a divorce or face lift, you're only cheating yourself. Basking in the misery of others is counterproductive to professional achievement.

## ***Procrastination and Mentors***

Mentoring is one of the more valuable contributions you can make to a company. Its positive effects must never be underestimated. Many a successful human being had a mentor or several mentors at different stages of his life.

But anything carried out to excess has a negative effect. If you think you have a sacred duty to mentor your subordinate because you want to develop his potential for a managerial role, then do so. Just don't do it excessively, or else someone above you will begin to think, "Those who can't, teach." Apply the brakes on your predilection for over-mentoring. Realize that you are procrastinating on your own tasks.

## ***Networking or Evading Responsibilities?***

Your secretary looks up, surprised, as you bolt out the door. "Where are you off too?" "To my networking club", you say. "But that's where you were all afternoon yesterday!" she persists.

"I belong to another networking club. It's called 'Diversifying Your Contacts' I've got to expand those contacts, otherwise, the company can't sell what's left in our inventory."

Go ahead and network, if you must. But if the excess inventory runs out of control, don't go crying to your networking buddies.

They're not buying any of that excess inventory. Better spend some time in planning how to get rid of the extra inventory through other more effective channels.

### ***Not Happy on Your Job?***

Don't procrastinate about leaving and seeking better opportunities elsewhere, if you're no longer happy on the job. If you and upper management no longer see eye-to-eye on your role in the whole scheme of things, then be prepared to cut your losses. Start looking for another job at once and hand in your resignation when ready.

If your salary is your sole means of support, then time your departure in such a way that you have another job waiting for you. Don't let a regular paycheck or stock options or sheer convenience feed your procrastinating habits. Yes, this is a tough decision, but remember that new windows of opportunity are opening all the time ONLY if we decide to look for them.

### ***How are You Today?***

People like to mill in and out of private offices just to make small talk. They're the classic procrastinators at work. If they enter your office uninvited and appear to be engaging you in idle chatter, here is author Jane Smith's tip ("*Successful Work Habits*", Hodder & Stoughton, 2002): stand up and remain standing. And don't ask your unwanted visitor to sit down!

I'd also suggest you be frank. Say politely you've got two urgent projects or reports on your desk that you must submit today, and excuse yourself for not having the time to chat.

### ***Procrastinating and Expanding Your Knowledge Base***

A corporation does not need stale ideas from stale employees. Invest the time in upgrading your skills and expanding your knowledge base.

Learn a new language, add to your repertory of software, and take life-enhancing courses offered by your local college or university.

Don't procrastinate, because you'll never know when your company will create a position requiring a foreign language. Moreover, you may eventually find a better paying job or a promotion with your new found skills.

### ***Leaving Your Job?***

Your successor deserves a smooth transition. Schedule your departure intelligently. Tie up loose ends so that you can hand over your files and pending matters to whoever is taking over your job.

Help him succeed by not procrastinating. Type out an information sheet resembling a Frequently Asked Question list and give it to him.

This way, when the actual transitioning takes place, you don't waste time addressing routine questions, leaving you more time to show him the key aspects of your functions.

## **Procrastination and Human Relationships**

### **Procrastination and Guilt**

“I want to think things more. I don't want to hurt him.” How many times have we heard that before? Men and women say they don't want to do anything – especially end a relationship – impulsively.

The problem is you're the problem. Admit it. The relationship's been going downhill for the last 12 months. You've craved for freedom frequently, but you still can't get to tell your mate that love's gone out the window.

Stop pretending that you need to think things through. Stop feeling guilty about the relationship not working any longer. No matter how you analyze it, it all boils down to the same thing: time to move on. Here are examples of what your procrastination is causing:

- You deprive yourself of the mental freedom you need to concentrate on other aspects of your life,

- You deprive yourself of the opportunity to meet other people who share your interests and with whom you can have a meaningful relationship,
- You deprive your mate of the truth about how you feel,
- You deprive your mate of the opportunity to meet other people,
- You deprive your mate and yourself of the chance to find happiness again.

Just muster up the courage and say it. Time heals all wounds.

### ***It's Not What You Say, it's HOW You Say It***

No one says ending a relationship is easy. There have been documented accounts of people turning suicidal after a break-up, separation or divorce. They fall into a depression, and a few are unable to come out of it whole and able to trust again.

But if you procrastinate because you're worried about the aftermath, you'll only be doing a disservice to yourself and to the other person. Talk to your mate when you have full rein of your emotions.

Yes, honesty is still the best policy but this is where you'll have to optimize on your diplomat's skills. Choose your words, and dwell on the positive. Convince her that both of you would be better off with somebody else. Offer to remain friends so the transition is not emotionally devastating.

## ***Procrastination and the Dating Game***

In "*Lives Without Balance*", Steven Carter and Judith Sokol (Villard Books, 1992) discuss the phenomenon of confirmed bachelors, male and female.

Striking a balance between work and play is still considered the ideal, no matter how sacred you think the work ethic is: "By now if you are unattached, it's probably overwhelmingly apparent that your lifestyle is not conducive to finding or forming a solid relationship.

Whether you're male or female, you are simply so involved in your work that you don't have the necessary time or energy for dating... Yet you ache for a relationship..." Is procrastination barring you from a meaningful relationship? You decide...

## ***Father and Mother Issues***

One of the worst kinds of procrastination is when you carry resentment from childhood into adolescence and into adulthood. Here you are in your 40's and that childhood resentment is still brewing inside you. All these years you've allowed it to grow into a cancer because you won't deal with it.

Don't let your procrastination erode any love that's left. If you're angry about something with mom or dad, speak up.

If they explained their side, perhaps that resentment may just whittle away, and you'll only berate for yourself for making a mountain out of a molehill. Be responsible and mature. You can't continue blaming your parents for your misfortunes.

### ***Siblings Issues***

Don't procrastinate with these either. Instead of putting off a project in which your older sister asked you for help, why not just tell her in a straightforward manner that you don't have time to spare because of your school work and other commitments. Tell her sooner rather than later so you can avoid any friction.

### ***Well Meaning Aunts...***

Everyone has a doting aunt. They think the world of us and would give us anything in the world to make us happy – including their used make-up kits, clothes and handbags. The generational divide in fashion tastes though is too apparent to ignore.

Don't postpone telling your aunt Mable that you don't want her fire engine red lipstick, her roaring 20's dinner gown and her leopard skin handbag. If you don't tell her now, she'll shower you with more undesirable gifts.

Don't procrastinate because you don't want to hurt her feelings. Just be honest. Say you appreciate her thoughtfulness but that is not your style.

And remember what we said earlier about clutter. The procrastinating monster rears its ugly head in between the dark recesses of your closet that's looking more like a huge wasteland.

### ***Let's Go Shopping...***

Or "let's go see a movie." "Let's bar hop tonight." "Can you go with me to this concert?" "Join me for dinner at my step mother's. I don't want to be alone with her."

Do you have friends who seem to want to include you in all – and we mean all – of their activities? Is it their constant need for company, or simply a case of not having a backbone? If you're not capable of a firm but polite no, you'll receive a lot more invitations you can handle.

Friendships have to be nurtured, but this is overkill. Shed off your procrastination habits and tell your friend politely you can't go out with her anymore. She'll survive. Or she can find someone else to drag along.

### ***Mother-in-Law...***

One woman was lamenting the fact that her mother-in-law always seems to drop in around the time she's preparing dinner for her husband. This woman endured her mother-in-law's unwelcome visits – not to mention her bitter words – for six months, but feels she's come to the end of her rope.

The woman said her mother-in-law says things like... *"My dear Albert (that's her husband) would much rather pepper his steak than salt it."* Or... *"Oh dear, I don't think he's too fond of cheese cake; he has a weakness though for French pastries. I'm surprised he hasn't told you."*

If the woman is as smart in the human relationships department as she is in the kitchen, she'll know how to deal with her mother-in-law. But she better take action now or she'll end up soaking her in a pot of scalding soup!

### ***If There's a Will, There's a Way***

I'm not referring here to the will to do something. I'm talking about a real Will – as in Last Will and Testament. Here is an example...

Steve's father is dying and is about to sign his last will. Steve knows he is going to leave a larger part of his estate to his older brother, Walter, being the eldest child. And here's the painful part.

Steve knows that Walter has been arrested a few times for gambling debts and credit card fraud. The family kept this secret from Steve's father because of his illness. For the last five years, Steve has been arguing with his younger brother and sisters to tell their father about Walter's predicament, but they did not want him to worry unnecessarily.

If Steve procrastinates and the Will is signed, when Steve's father passes away, his inaction is tantamount to squandering his father's hard-earned money. Worse, your Walter's situation will deteriorate further.

When you give a chronic gambler more money, what do you really think he's going to do with it? Steve cannot afford to procrastinate. He must speak at once.

### ***Aging Parents Need Your Time***

Let's assume your parents have lost their autonomy and are in a home for the aged. Have you been to one of these places lately? Old sick people can't move around anymore and are confined to their wheelchairs all day long.

You see the look on their faces – the look that says they could use some company, need to be read to, or need someone to just listen to their troubles.

Sons and daughters with families of their own and who lead hectic lives come less often, a few have stopped coming. Think what a pity it would be if you procrastinated in visiting. Remember that once they are gone, nothing else can be done.

## ***Procrastination and Your Health***

Health conditions need immediate attention. Don't procrastinate in seeing a doctor to have the following checked: growths, tumors, change in appetite, consistent chest pain, numbness that doesn't go away, frequent dizziness, irregular bowel movement, loss of appetite, depression, blood in your stool, persistent coughing, unusual changes in the skin, or a general feeling of being unwell. Procrastination may be a leading cause of major illnesses and diseases that could have been controlled or prevented if dealt with on time.

# **Self Improvement – A Sense of Wellbeing**

Some of the following sections may not be relevant to you. I decided to include them for those that need them. Feel free to skip them as you go if they do not apply to your situation.

## ***Let's Get Physical***

You've complained enough about your weight. Your parents are tired of listening to you, and so are your friends. It's been a yo-yo, on and off, touch and go affair with the scale.

You're only 30 but you're overweight by twice that number. The doctor just said that you're a likely candidate for diabetes or coronary disease if you don't do something about your weight.

See which of these statements apply to you.

I'd feel better if I lost weight because:

- I would like myself better.
- I'd be happier about my physical appearance.
- My friends and family would like me better too.
- I'd be more positive about life, and I'd slowly build up my self-confidence. These qualities attract people.
- I'd be more comfortable in my relationships with the opposite sex. I would stop agonizing about what they're thinking of me being overweight. I want them to think of me as attractive, and pleasant to be with.
- My doctor would stop nagging me. My blood pressure, my cholesterol, and my blood sugar levels would be lower, and with some effort, I'd probably regain that old energy I had in my teens.
- My friends would respect me more and seek my opinion about their own problems.

The benefits are immeasurable. If you stop procrastinating, you could start enjoying these benefits very soon.

## ***The Gym... a Scary Place?***

If you go to the gym frequently enough, you get used to seeing certain types: the fanatics, the confident and the driven.

Then there are those who can't look you in the eye – they're attired in clothes that camouflage their size and their demeanor suggests they're embarrassed about being in the gym at all. They look miserable, move awkwardly, and are terrified of the machines.

You were there once. Don't procrastinate about giving them encouragement. A simple, sincere smile would go a long way. You don't need to give advice or offer to show them how a particular machine can be adjusted. If you smile at them every day, chances are by next week, they shall have mustered enough courage to ask you to help them figure out their fitness routine. It works all the time!

## ***If You've Reached a Plateau at the Gym...***

Even your fitness program needs re-hashing. If you stick to the same routine for more than 6 weeks, and you've got fitness goals to achieve (stronger hamstrings as an example), then don't postpone achieving those goals.

Get a fitness trainer to help you. The essential thing about fitness is variety. You can't be doing the same exercises indefinitely without varying your routine. If you do, no wonder you'll reach a plateau!

First, you could be less enthused doing those repetitive movements with the same muscle groups, and second, those muscles may get overworked to the point that they're no longer reacting to your pushing and pulling.

Don't let a trainer intimidate you. They're always willing to discuss your goals - that's what they're trained and paid to do. If you procrastinate, you may not learn the secrets to turning your biceps into the tennis balls you want them to be. They'll remain the size of grapes.

### ***Procrastination and Cosmetic Surgery***

Cosmetic Surgery is no sin. Why should it be? People have a right to change their appearance if it gives them more self-confidence, and less of an inferiority complex.

If your long hooked nose has been bothering you for years and you can re-shape it safely, why not get a nose job done? People do it all the time. And even if half of them won't admit, they're suddenly looking wonderful. And they're happier, more radiant.

Don't procrastinate. Cosmetic surgery is NOTHING to be ashamed of. If you've been thinking about it, go for it. Get a new nose, or whatever you want to improve and nurse that bruised ego back to health.

## ***Procrastination and Your Wardrobe***

It's been ages since anyone complimented you on your wardrobe. You walk along the office corridor and you notice people turn away.

Even if you've never been vain about your appearance, we must admit it is important; especially nowadays that there's so much press coverage about the oft-repeated concept of "dressing for success."

Not sure you're wearing stylish clothes? Not sure your make-up isn't appropriate anymore? Not sure what colors match? And your shoes... do they seem fashionable or like you haven't stepped into a shoe store for the last 15 years?

If you are interested in climbing the corporate ladder, you shouldn't procrastinate about seeing an image consultant. Your brains and experience got you this far. Are you going to let your image set you back a few light years? Don't hesitate. Image consultants would give anything to turn a project into a success. And yes, this piece of advice goes for men too!

## ***That Turbulence Inside...***

Thank goodness for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We have cosmetic surgeons, image consultants, and we also have... therapists. You sure deserve an "A" for appearance... you're the envy of your friends, the campus belle, and the office "beauty and brains" who's loved, hated, loved.

Your ideas are imitated by management, your flawless complexion is making everyone curious about the night cream brand you use, and none of your muscles is out of place. What's even more aggravating is, in spite of your God-given gifts, you're unpretentious and unassuming.

BUT – That turbulence inside you is slowly becoming a full blown unstoppable thunderstorm. It's eroding your confidence, and your wounds remain uncared for. We all agree with this. Emotional wounds take the longest to heal. You need an expert who'll come to the rescue.

You've thought about consulting a therapist and even asked for referrals, but... that list of psychologists has been sitting inside your drawer for the last six months. Staring at it won't help you. Dial the first number on the list. Ask for an appointment. Don't procrastinate anymore. Your best you may be just a few appointments away.

### ***Conquer Procrastination and Change Your Life Radically***

People procrastinate because they're overwhelmed by the enormity of what they're facing. To conquer procrastinating does not mean to change your activities radically, or suddenly switching from one profession to another.

As Carter and Sokol explain, "There is usually a reason why we chose the work we did, have the friends we do, and lead the lives we lead. If you are like people, you don't want a different life; you just want to be able to manage the one you have."

Do bear one thing in mind. The more you delay, the more dissatisfied you will be with your life. Resolve to conquer procrastination. Be proactive and you will see a positive radical change in your life.

### ***Procrastination and Stress***

Many people have been known to suddenly wake up one day and decide they want out. They walk away from 20-year marriages, break a childhood friendship and disengage from lifelong commitments.

They decided it was better to walk away from a situation that was generating more stress than they could handle - a wise decision on their part, given that a few reports have zeroed in on it as a potential leading cause of cancer and/or heart attacks.

Give this simplistic equation a thought or two...

stress ▶ indecision ▶ more stress ▶ procrastination ▶ inaction ▶ triple stress ▶ illness!! Doesn't look pretty, does it? Then do something about it!

### ***Learn to Manage Your Stress***

You've heard the expression, "somethings got to give." If you wish to deal with your stress more effectively, you'll have to cut back on some of your activities because you'll need a reservoir of strength to confront that stress.

But make a decision now about what you can give up, so that you'll have some energy remaining for other challenges that come your way. For instance, if you do volunteer work three times a week at the home for battered woman, how about diminishing the frequency to once a week.

If your daughter who was being physically abused by her husband finally had the courage to pack her bags and leave him... what would you do? If she comes to you for help and you know it will be a lengthy recovery period, you must give up on something to dedicate time to her situation. Charity begins at home. Don't create two different sources of stress. Decide which is more important and take action.

### ***Procrastination and Alcoholism***

Alcoholism is a SERIOUS problem, no two ways about it. And it can be criminal, if you drink, drive and hit someone. People may find comfort in alcohol when they are feeling helpless and desperate. But these feelings are conducive to more drinking, more often. If this happens to you, realize that you need help.

Don't procrastinate if you are abusing alcohol. There are humanitarian organizations in your community that will provide referrals. Or go on the Net and begin your research into recovery.

Drugs are bad news too. People who use and abuse drugs can destroy not only their future, but also their family's future.

Drug rehabilitation clinics have mushroomed all over the country. That's why nobody is alone if they find themselves in this situation... and that's the good news.

If you are a young person reading this and the "shoe fits", stop procrastinating and see a drug counselor in school, or ask for your doctor's advice about where you can go.

It's best to invest in drug rehabilitation now than to squander your lifetime savings on a never-ending need for drugs and end up in places you don't want to end up. Don't procrastinate in withdrawing – and this isn't a contradiction of terms. Get treatment at once. You'll suffer from withdrawal symptoms at first, but they're only temporary.

### ***There is Light at the End of the Tunnel***

You've tried everything – plan A, plan B. This option, that option. You've taken detours... short-cuts. Even dabbled in medieval art, of all things. A solution is nowhere to be found. Your life is one shattered mess and you're feeding on the splinters. Yours is a "life of quiet desperation," as one famous writer once said.

There's one person in your support system that you've forgotten: your Priest, Reverend, Pastor, Rabbi, and the Holy Iman – whatever faith you were born or converted into – never procrastinate in getting that much needed spiritual guidance.

Your problems may be your wake up call to the fact that you're spiritually devoid and empty. Spiritual leaders rejoice and give thanks whenever one of their prodigal sons returns to the fold. Don't wait until you plunge into complete darkness. There's one flickering candle left. Grab it and find your way out of the dark hole.

## **Bonus Tips**

This section contains some bonus tips. Some you will use, some may not be relevant to you. There's no logical order to these tips, but smile... at least this is tax free advice!

Your morning paper is divided into sections, and each section caters to the needs and expectations of specific family members.

The news and business sections will be the sections for good old dad, cooking and arts section for mom, fashion for the young teen in the household and international politics for the budding intellectual junior.

Let's use these sections to serve as the springboards for your bonus tips: *headlines, business, health, fashion, cuisine, environment, real estate, and readers' turn to write.*

We repeat, there's no logic here, only a method to the madness. Refer back to them from time to time, if you feel your life is spiraling down into madness and chaos. And don't forget your mantra!

### ***Headlines – My Duty to the Country***

If your leaders are pondering war and your beliefs go the other way, write your congressman a note – it doesn't have to be a flawlessly written letter. Urge him not to sign any legislation that hints at the country taking up arms.

Suggest negotiation instead of confrontation, diplomacy in place of ultimatums, peace, not war. This way, you've done your civic duty, and you're not procrastinating about potentially saving a beautiful country.

### ***Headlines – Changing Medicare Laws Again!***

Quick, take pen and paper and send off another note. If the changes in your country's health care act will affect you adversely, don't wait for others to take up arms. Be among the first to protest. If thousands – or millions – do the same thing and it's an election year – these letters might just change your leaders' stance.

Would you rather procrastinate than pay a 25% increase in your yearly drug bill?

## ***Business – Cut Your Losses***

If you haven't learned from the Nortel fiasco, don't wait until the next major stock in your portfolio turns into another Nortel, or Enron, or Worldcom. You know what happened to the small investor. He thought the stock, being a blue chip, might pick up momentum again.

Well, it started as a lackluster stock, and then it became sluggish, finally becoming a junk stock. There were millions of procrastinators waiting around for the stock market to do a 360 degree turn.

Money theorists agree. It'll be awhile before we see another spectacular performance like the one we jubilated over on the eve of the millennium. Everyone felt rich when 2000 rolled around. A lot of them are now in debt. Don't procrastinate. It's your money. It's your retirement.

## ***Business – Ask a Financial Planner to Help You Out***

Your local banker would be more than willing to refer you to one of the bank's in-house financial planners. If you've fared poorly with finances, or want to have a better grasp of money matters, a financial planner could be a life saver.

Sit down with your planner: tell him how you owe, how much you want to save for retirement, what assets and liabilities are on your books - he'll do the rest.

Do not procrastinate.

Talk to a Financial Planner as soon as possible. It could mean the difference between retiring like most or living your golden years knowing that things will be taken care of.

### ***Health – Overbooked Agenda? What are your Priorities?***

Keep it simple. If you have too much to do, what hours are left for your health and fitness goals? Are you using your overbooked agenda as another excuse not to go to the gym or take that tennis lesson package your partner gave you for your birthday?

If you procrastinate further, 5 pounds will become 10, then 15, and it gets harder as you add more pounds. It's much, much harder to shed those pounds when you get to 30 pounds overweight. Tackle the weight issue while the pound gain is still minimal and manageable. Your health will thank you.

### ***Health – The Newly-opened Pilates Center...***

“Yea...it's just a fad, it'll go away when a new exercise routine is invented.” Can you detect a hint of procrastination in this statement? Even if it's just a fad, at least it's a healthy fad. Hop into the car and check it out.

Most clubs will let you try out a week of free membership. You may not know it, but Pilates is producing stronger backs and more solid core muscles, and turning people into happy, pain-free individuals. Why hesitate? What have you got to lose?

### ***Fashion - Dull, Boring Hairstyle?***

Hate your hair? Having a "Hair Day"? How about a visit to a salon near you? You'll be amazed at the number of miracle workers they have on site. And the range of hair products these days is incredible. Remember that cliché about hair being your crowning glory? Corny, but true. Give your hair the care it deserves. As the optimists love to say, "You never know whom you'll meet"

### ***Cuisine – Win His Heart Back***

You might be taking a risk with new, sexy underwear. Why don't you follow the old but good rule... win his heart through his stomach.

Even your friends say they won't eat what you cook. Admit it's your major failing and take cooking lessons at your community's recreational center. A new hobby is food for the soul, a drug-free stimulant for the mind. When you graduate from the course – kudos to you for not procrastinating – you may just bring the old lover back.

### ***Cuisine - Show off the Gourmet Cook in You***

Your local paper has been publishing requests for recipes. Delight readers by digging old recipes from grandma's time and you could be a winning author! Submit your recipe entry and keep your fingers crossed.

Some women have “accidentally” started food and catering businesses because they weren’t shy about sharing an ingredient or two. If you think your recipe deserves a Pillsbury prize or whatever other prize is being offered, don that apron and go for it!

### ***Environment – Go Green!***

Is anyone paying attention to Going Green these days? How does one NOT procrastinate in doing what’s good for the environment?

Here are a few suggestions:

- Write your municipal officials and encourage them to send our regular reminders to local residents that recycling boxes are available at city hall – for free. Ask them to publish recommendations on the art of composting and how to filter through household waste.
- Take the initiative and sort out your garbage every day. Recycle whenever possible.
- If you have free time, offer your services for free to an environmental cause. Communities organize spring clean-ups annually. Give of your time. Volunteer ONLY if you are not procrastinating more important aspects of your life.

Don’t procrastinate. The environment needs you. Help your children breathe cleaner, healthier air.

## ***Environment – River Running Dry?***

Again, here's where pen and paper can be powerful tools. Don't delay writing to your local officials about a factory or plant that is violating environmental regulations. Report it to the authorities before the clouds become heavy with pollutants and the rivers run dry. It's about your health and your family's health. It's about your environment and your community. Do not procrastinate!

## **Real Estate - Property Values**

An individual was overheard saying in the café the other day that he'd never forgive himself for stalling in his decision to buy a piece of property that had everything – location, great low maintenance condition, low price, recent renovations, etc.

The owners, who didn't really care about the conditions of the market or making a huge profit because they were going into a retirement facility shortly, were only asking for \$200,000.00.

By procrastinating, the individual missed out on the property because someone else – who was less of a procrastinator – grabbed it. The property will recoup its real value eventually, up to \$350,000.00 in a few years from now. Now you know the truth - procrastination is an expensive mistake in Real Estate too.

## **Real Estate – Clean Up before the Doorbell Rings**

Your Realtor already warned you once before... don't wait until the last minute to clean up the yard and tidy up the house. The open house is going to take place any day now. You've put it off until the day before, and the cleaning up is taking longer than you thought.

Next day, the doorbell rings, and the weeds were not pulled out, the shrubs not trimmed, the hallway not cleared of clutter, and the kitchen faucet is leaking. The closets are unrecognizable. The books on the shelves are covered in dust. The flowers are wilting. And you forgot to do this... and that... you get the picture!

The buyers said thank you anyway, and looked at another house. Opportunity missed!

## ***It's Your Turn...***

Calling all writers! National newspapers usually allot a section to readers who want to try their hand at writing about a personal experience or about a how-to project that they can share with readers.

You've always aspired to write, but you keep voicing out the same, tired excuse: "I'm not feeling inspired," or "I have writer's block, " or "It's just a silly dream of mine."

Actually, accomplished writers all echo the same thing: don't wait for a flash of lightning to shake you out of the doldrums, or that writer's block will go away and you'll be churning out pages in no time. The only time you'll write is when you stop procrastinating and start typing words on your keyboard. They don't have to be eloquent at first, just type whatever comes to mind.

For writers, the opposite of procrastinating is warming up. If you want to be a writer, you should take this very seriously. One brilliant writer suggested that to warm up, she uses this trick and it works 99.9% of the time.

Type a passage from a favorite author's book. Pretend you're the one writing it. Next, try to paraphrase it. You don't realize it but you've already started to write by putting your own words. If you devote 30 minutes each day doing this exercise, you'll be on your merry way to being a writer!

Writing contests are abundant. There are thousands in North America, many more across the Pacific, and a whole lot more in Europe and Asia. Most of these publishing entities have web sites wherein they advertise their monthly, quarterly and annual contests.

If you don't know what writing contests to enter, just type "writing contests" on any search engine and you'll get all the information you need: type of writing (mystery, non-fiction, poetry, novellas, flash fiction, etc), prize money, entry fee (if any), deadline and format required.

If you started a story but never got around to finishing it, fish it out of your hard drive and finish it. Don't let the fear of rejection make you procrastinate. "What if it's not good enough?" "What if I'm a lousy writer?"

Heed this advice from Jeff Hermann (*Writers' Guide to Book Editors, Publishers and Literary Agents*, 2000): "In my experience, the most insurmountable walls are the ones in your heads. No rejection is fatal until the writer walks away from the battle leaving the written work behind, undefended and unwanted."

In other words, it is all in your head. Do not allow your subconscious mind to take power over you.

## Conclusion

I could come up with a second batch of ideas and tips to get you out of your inertia, but if you don't at least try some of the advice given to you in this ebook, you'll never be in control of your own time and life.

You certainly are not expected to execute on every aspect detailed in this ebook. That would be an impossible mission, too tall an order, and downright an unrealistic goal.

Lester R. Bittel in his book, *"Right on Time"* (McGrawHill, 1991) calls procrastination an insidious temptation that plagues all of us.

What may appear to be harmless procrastination can turn harmful - if done to excess. Overcoming procrastination is an on-going task. We are human and from time to time we all procrastinate. The important thing is to get back on track every time we discover we are procrastinating.

Procrastination means **losing** precious time, **wasting** valuable resources and **missing** life's golden opportunities. Don't fall for that. You deserve better!

Mastering your time and optimizing your resources are excellent remedies for procrastination. But they're not miracle cures, nor are they instant therapies. Only you can manage the absence –or presence- of productivity in your life.

You can surround yourself with experts who excel at multi-tasking, time management and all these nice-sounding principles emanating from the Harvard School of Management, but if you don't act on their advice, procrastination will not disappear – ever.

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. That sounds almost biblical, but it rings true when we're talking about Bittel's "insidious temptation."

An idle mind is the devil's workshop. If you just keep thinking things out without doing, then you're only cheating yourself. The doing is the most important. For it is in the doing that you produce results you want.

It is in the doing that you discover hidden sources of your creativity. It is in the doing that you gain momentum. It is in the doing that you become a refined problem-solver. And the more you do, the quicker you become.

You have the means to banish the devil forever. Let him play his tricks in someone else's workshop. Once you've learned not to procrastinate in most aspects of your daily life, success is only a step away.

“If we did all the things we are capable of doing,

we would literally astound ourselves”

~ Thomas A. Edison

**Take action now!**

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## Resources

Would like to hire a **Life Coach** to help you **overcome procrastination**, set S.M.A.R.T. Goals and Achieve your Dreams but is not within your budget? Discover Your Potential may be the answer for you!

[Discover Your Potential](#)

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