

Stress Management Techniques to Beat Procrastination

Learn how to relieve stress by taking control of your time. The key to being in control of your stress at work is not so much about how you deal with the stress situation, but more about how you arrange your time use to get everything done - and stay in control of your emotions.

Do you have too much to do, too many ideas, and an abundance of calls and emails to return? Do you feel overwhelmed and just don't know where to start? Do you sometimes doubt your abilities and hence put off making client calls? Do you tackle the easy tasks first and try to avoid the big, complicated jobs? If so, then you are a **covert procrastinator**...and it is probably taking **huge chunks of time, energy and productivity away from you each day!** People procrastinate for one key reason - they fall into the trap of making **emotional decisions** instead of **logical decisions**.

An emotional decision to do task 'A' over task 'B' is based on what will make you feel good in the moment. It is a bit like grabbing a chocolate bar because, even though you know it is unhealthy and stacks on the weight, you know it will taste good and make you feel happy for the moment. **A logical decision is based on 'what needs to be done' with very little regard for what will make you feel good or happy.**

The stress of avoiding doing something that you need to do creates tension and distraction. You will not be able to relieve stress if you are running from your responsibilities.

Avoiding calling clients, hiding from big projects, resisting setting clear financial goals and sticking to them, etc., are emotional decisions because these tasks don't necessarily feel good to do - in fact they are often confronting, intense and stressful. If, however, you are always making your decisions based on your emotions and 'how you feel' or whether you 'feel like doing it', you will never get the work done or drive your business effectively.

Procrastination is simply the emotional excuse to avoid doing something that doesn't feel good or fun.

It is time to stop letting your emotions rule your life and start practicing making logical decisions if you want to take control of the pressure and stress in your life.

All children have choice without responsibility. The maturation of a child is when they are given choice with responsibility. To become resilient to pressure, you need to be able to **get past your emotions** and do what needs to be done - irrespective of how it 'feels'. Procrastination is childish, irresponsible, and stupid.

Here are 5 tips on how to stop procrastinating:

1. Act fast

Get out of your head and emotions and into your body and start **DOING**. Most people are **action impotent** because they are busy feeling overloaded and overwhelmed that they don't

actually do anything.

Chunk down and act frequently. Stop talking about the problem to other people and stop thinking about the problem in your head - and start doing.

2. Drop the story

You are so used to giving your excuses that you probably don't even hear them anymore. The more reasons you tell yourself that 'it all feels too hard', 'I don't have enough time', 'I just don't know where to start' - that more this will become true for you. Your body responds to your mind's potential. If you make something feel that it is too difficult - then your body will not push itself to do it.

There was a story of a man who delivered meat to butchers early in the morning. Each day as he got into the back of his freezer truck to take the meat out, there was always a fear in the back of his mind that his truck door would slam shut and he would be stuck inside and freeze to death. It was a thought that bothered him everyday.

Early one winter's morning, on his first delivery of the day, he had parked in a side street next to the butcher's store. As he began to unload the truck he heard a heavy storm wind hit the side of his truck. Before he had a chance to react, the safety latch on his door broke and slammed shut and he became trapped inside he truck.

Some time later he was found, but unfortunately he had already died. He had frozen to death - his blood had frozen in his veins...but the freezer in the truck was turned off. Through the fear in his mind he had 'thought himself to death'.

In the very first session, one of my coaching clients discovered that the reason she was experiencing so much conflict and tension at work was because she was blaming other people for her problems and using excuses (stories) to avoid taking action. A powerful insight. [1]

What story are you running in your head?

3. Act 'As if'

Can you think back to the first time that you rode a bike on two wheels all by yourself? Every since that time you have been able to get onto a two wheel bike and ride it without any help. You didn't think about whether you could do it or not - you just did it. You knew you could do it so you did it. There was no doubt because you **acted 'as if' it was definitely possible.**

Research has found that feeling overloaded and stressed out can bring on self doubt [2]

If you approached your work as if everything was definitely possible and removed the doubt, you would achieve a lot more. Again, your body simply responds to your mind's potential. Drop the doubt and act 'as if' everything is possible.

4. Focus on productive activity

What is the most productive use of your time? Is it answering emails, forwarding on jokes,

calling new clients, doing billable jobs, sitting in meetings, etc. Are you making emotional decisions on what you want to do first, second, and third based on what 'feels good' or what is easy to 'knock off' quickly. If you are in the field of billable hours, how much time are you wasting in replying to emails, taking interruption phone calls, or dealing with issues that are non income producing.

Stop procrastinating by doing the easy, non core/income producing tasks. Focus on the important stuff first - the work that is critical to get done first and fit everything in around that.

5. Clean up - Set up - Get up

Are you working amongst a pile of papers, folders, and stacks of miscellaneous things in your office? You probably feel overwhelmed just sitting in your office looking at all that stuff! Get in early, stay back late, come in on a weekend - just do what you need to do to **clean up the mess**. Your mind can't focus well in a cluttered space.

'But I know where everything is in my pile' I hear you protest. Rubbish! This is just an excuse not to take control of your time and space. **Don't get comfortable with clutter**. Create clarity by cleaning up. **Get rid of the visual overwhelm**.

Next, get set up - write your lists and agendas to get through...but do it from a clean space. Then, you can get going and get busy doing your work. Most people do this in reverse and wonder why they are feeling stressed out and overloaded - they get busy, then try to make a list/agenda, and then find themselves in a mess which never seems to go away. Be smart - clean up, set up then get going.

REFERENCES:

- [1] www.bouncebackfast.com/coaching_life_skills.html
- [2] <http://www.shreveporttimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060510/LIVING0404/605100348/1004>

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