



Now is the time to stop procrastinating

I procrastinate.

Here's an example. I have a writing project, and I feel overwhelmed by it. All of a sudden my body takes over and goes into action. It heads downstairs and raids the refrigerator. After that nice snack, I decide it is time to clean the refrigerator I haven't touched in eons. I move on to organize my bookshelf and really must polish that gunked up soap dish in that basement guest room--this instant! I might have a guest some day, and then where would I be?

Even little kids do this. My 4 year old grandson will want to pick up his toys and put his clothes away to avoid going to bed. Of course, his favorite is for me to read him story, after story, after story. Here he gets my complicity in his procrastination. Why this wacky behavior?

Most people don't accomplish all they could because they simply cannot get started. Why? There are four common reasons:

1. The task is *difficult and or/overwhelming*
2. The task is *time-consuming*
3. *They lack knowledge or skills*
4. They are afraid (*especially of failure*)
5. *Perfectionism.*

Coaching Question: What will you do to eliminate procrastination?

Simple Cure: Dreading something often takes more energy than doing it. Focus on getting started and developing momentum, not on finishing *everything* (perfectly).

- If the problem is lack of knowledge or skill, make a plan for getting more
- Make a list of the benefits of not procrastinating.
- Identify your own goals, strengths, values and priorities and work within those.
- Compare your actions with the values you feel you have. Are your values consistent with your actions?
- Discipline yourself to use time wisely: Set priorities. (Remember, it's not procrastination if it wasn't worth doing in the first place.)
- Use the "inchworm technique". Look at a project and break it into small chunks and work on the little pieces. Reward yourself after you complete a task, however small.

- Motivate yourself: Dwell on success, not on failure. Tell yourself: this isn't so hard, it won't take long, or I can easily do some part of it, or I'll learn while doing.
- Picture in your mind what you would like to achieve. When you have that clearly in mind, then begin somewhere--anywhere--trying to achieve some of your vision.

Coaching Tip: Overcoming procrastination produces peace of mind, a feeling of strength and purpose--healthy feeling of being in charge of your life. You will experience increased personal freedom, so *start working on procrastination today.*

Homework: Make a list of five things you're procrastinating on. Work on one each week. Pick a new one when you have that one done.

Quotes:

"Procrastination is the thief of time. *Anon*

"And if not now, when?" *Talmud*

Resources:

Burka, Jane B., and Yuen, Lenora M. *Procrastination*. Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1983

Ellis, Albert, and Knaus, William J. *Overcoming Procrastination*. New York: Signet Books, 1977

Sharon is a life coach specializing in helping those with chronic health challenges live well and meaningfully. She spent 19 years on dialysis, and for the last 14 years has had a kidney transplant. To learn more and read other Coach's Corner articles, visit her Web site: <http://www.lifeisagift.com>.