

# 5 ways to kick the procrastination habit!

By Julie Plenty

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## 5 WAYS TO KICK THE PROCRASTINATION HABIT!

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Do you rush around doing things at the last minute? How many times have you mentioned something that you felt you ought to do and said "yes, I'll get round to it", but "it" never happens. Procrastination means to "defer" action, but it rarely serves us well, unless we know what's behind it and what to do about it.

Procrastination isn't only about deciding not to do something or to delay doing something - it also means that we have chosen to do something else instead. So, it's watching TV instead of having a relaxing swim. It's going out to lunch with a friend when there's a report to be completed. Habitually making choices which don't serve us well will continually create challenges and drama in our lives.

Procrastination causes stress. Yes, most of us have too much on our plates, but leaving things until they really have to be done just means that we put even more pressure on ourselves.

Delaying things takes time and energy - because when you know that something needs to be done and you're not doing it - it stays in the back of your mind and silently drains you.

Procrastination is only a habit and habits can be changed. The first thing to ask yourself is whether procrastination is a sign that you need to change something fundamental in your life (ie job, environment, relationships) or if it's masking fear, lack of self-confidence, self-esteem etc.

There are a number of ways to tackle procrastination and you can use different strategies for different situations.

### 1. Conversion

Many of us live a "have to", rather than a "want to" life. Our lives are full of obligations and things that we don't really want to do. But with some creative and imaginative thinking, we can convert the "have tos" into the "want tos". How can we do this? By thinking beyond the immediate task and focusing on the wider benefits of completion.

For instance, if you don't want to do the books or open your bank statements, you can try asking yourself what are the benefits of greater financial control.

Will you have much more money in the long run as you learn to save, spend and invest it wisely? How much freer will you feel now that you've taken back control and your energy isn't being drained by the nagging, insistent worry that you ought to be doing something about it - because you already are!

## 2. Prioritisation

By which I mean do the thing you least want to do when you have the most energy to do it. You can always find the energy to do things that you enjoy doing, but you need your energy level to be at its highest when tackling things that you don't really care for. So, if you're at your best in the morning, tackle administration, clear out your clutter and vice versa if you're an afternoon or evening person.

## 3. Delegation

We have things that we're good at and things that we prefer to do. Ask yourself (i) Does it have to be done at all? and (ii) Does it have to be done by you? Is there someone else who could do the job? You may decide that you don't want to concentrate your energies on bookkeeping, but you can hire a bookkeeper to free you from this. Or someone else at work may like administration, ask for their - or more - assistance.

## 4. Do it in pieces

The difficulty with procrastination is that the task may seem overwhelming because it has been avoided for so long. It has grown in size and taken on a life of its own! Bring it back down to earth and start tackling it in bite sized pieces (when you're at your best! - see no 2)

## 5. Develop a system

Procrastination takes up time and energy. You may always find yourself on the defensive as things catch up with you. Developing a system means that you nip procrastination in the bud.

If you want to take more exercise, then exercise with a buddy, hire a personal trainer (either at your house or at the gym). Join a walking club, sports club - somewhere where you are committed to being and encourage others to commit with you. Set up structures which ensure that procrastination doesn't get the chance to put its feet under your table.

And remember to reward yourself when you've broken through and achieved something.

Dealing with procrastination is a way of taking back control of your life and the ultimate reward is having more time to really enjoy your life.

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