

BEATING PROCRASTINATION

I am dreadful at getting around to doing things. For the past six months I have been talking about painting and re-doing one of the children's rooms. I'd say not a day goes by that I don't think about it. Have I done anything? No! It is just typical of me with everything. How can I get myself moving and stop procrastinating?

Everyone occasionally puts off doing things, feels unmotivated, or avoids taking action. For most people the tendency to procrastinate is a basically normal attribute that, at worst, results in a little convenience or unnecessary time pressure.

Some people, however, seem to have enormous difficulty getting started and seem incapable of initiating tasks. Consequently these "expert procrastinators" frequently find themselves one or two steps in front of a virtual tidal wave of deadline stress, unfinished business, and loose ends.

Fortunately, regardless of whether you are a novice task avoider or a veteran activity delayer, there are several very useful methods for beating procrastination and thereby increasing productivity while at the same time reducing stress.

The first and probably most important anti-procrastination method is simply to understand the relationship between motivation and action. Most people mistakenly believe that motivation must precede action – that before you can actually do something you must first feel motivated to do it. RIGHT?

WRONG! The fact is that in most cases ***action precedes motivation*** – that is, once action has been initiated motivation tends to gather momentum and it becomes increasingly easy to continue what has been started. As the saying goes: "Getting started is the hardest part."

DON' WAIT FOR MOTIVATION BEFORE TAKING ACTION – MAKE MOTIVATION BY TAKING ACTION.

DON'T WAIT UNTIL YOU ARE IN THE RIGHT MOOD, OR FEEL YOU ARE READY, OR ARE PSYCHED UP, OR HAVE EVERYTHING IN PLACE, OR FEEL YOU HAVE THE TIME, OR HAVE ALL THE MATERIALS, ETC.

TAKE ACTION FIRST. MOTIVATION WILL FOLLOW ALONG!

Many of us are deterred from starting a task or attending to a situation because it will only amount to a drop in the ocean, or feel like it won't even go one tenth of the way toward what you really want to do. "So why bother?" you ask yourself, and so simply proceed to do nothing. But as the other saying goes, the highest mountain is climbed by first taking just one step!

The next time you feel the creeping paralysis of procrastination taking hold of you, make a commitment to do just 15 minutes of the task you are avoiding. You will probably find that after the first few minutes elapse, the momentum of motivation will

be solidly upon you and you will continue the task with increasing interest and enthusiasm.

So, regarding getting the room painted and redecorated: Don't wait until you are ready, until you have everything decided, until you have a free week or weekend to do it. Take fifteen minutes today to do something. Let that be your goal. Go to the paint shop, get colour samples, and cello-tape them to the bedroom door! That's all. Make your first 15 minutes demand an unavoidable next fifteen minutes. Remember, your goal should not be to-get-the-job-completed. It should be to-get-the-job-started! Good luck. Next Week: Another simple technique.