

From Ideas to Actions

Instructions

Procrastination Exercise

Procrastination defined as ‘the action of delaying or postponing something’ is often perceived negatively. However, some procrastination is extremely helpful and enables you to work on an *open or unfinished project* subconsciously to provide innovative solutions.

To avoid removing useful procrastination habits, it is important to reflect on your own habits of procrastination and the category they fall into:

- Helpful procrastination – an intuitive response where something isn’t right – this could be due to incomplete information, incongruence with something important, response options not fully developed etc
- Unhelpful procrastination – causing helplessness, depression and paralysis due to fear

Susan Jeffers book ‘Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway’ describes the 3 levels of fear that stop us from doing things as follows:

Level 1 Fears experienced at surface level	
<i>Those That “Happen”</i>	<i>Those Requiring Action</i>
Aging Becoming disabled War Illness Accidents Natural disasters etc	Making decisions Changing career Making friends Losing weight Public speaking Being interviewed etc

Level 2 fears are not situation-oriented - they involve the ego. They are linked to inner states of mind rather than exterior situation reflecting your sense of self and your ability to handle this world.

- Rejection
- Success
- Failure
- Being vulnerable

Level 3 fears get to the heart of the problem being the biggest fear of them all – ‘I CAN’T HANDLE IT’. So beneath all of the fears is the fear the you won’t be able to handle whatever the outcome will be and hence to protect yourself you do nothing.

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The essence of the book is that at some level we all experience fear, and the only antidote to the fear is the act of doing.

So to understand and overcome the negative forms of procrastination:

Step 1: Reflect on your own procrastination – when and why do you procrastinate?

Step 2: If you have identified unhelpful paralysis:

- Accept the feeling of fear (notice it and acknowledge it)
- Work on your self-regard accepting that you will be OK *whatever* – this will lessen the fear of not being to handle it (see self-regard exercises)
- Work on action habits as the more you get into the habit of doing the easier it will become (see healthy action habits exercise)