

Six steps for dealing with Procrastination

This exercise uses 'away from' motivation as well as the positive 'toward'. If you are able, ask a friend to read out the steps to you, so you can really engage in the process.

Take something you are procrastinating on. Set aside about 15 minutes or so for the following exercise. Make sure you won't be interrupted. Switch off the phone, too.

Make sure this is something you *could* have acted upon before now - in other words you had the resources and the time to act, but didn't!

Now go through the following steps:

1. Stand on to your time line, with the past behind you and your future and the task in front of you. (Use a book, pile of papers, anything to represent the task and place it on the time line in front of you). Take a few minutes to think about, and to *feel*, just how much stress putting this off has already caused you since you first realised the task needed action. Be sure to really get into these feelings.
2. Think about, and *feel*, how much stress it is currently causing you - how much time you spend thinking about it (or trying to not think about it), feeling guilty about it, being reminded about it by yourself and by others, and so on. Really get in touch with these feelings of discomfort. Be aware of where you are feeling it in your body. Think about how much discomfort it *will* continue to cause you if you continue to do nothing about it for another few weeks or even another a few months.
3. Okay, you have had a really good experience of the uneasiness and unpleasantness involved in procrastinating on this issue. Let's 'break state' by wiggling your toes, or think about what you are having for dinner tonight, or both!
4. Now, step forward in time (on your time line) over the task so that the task is now behind you. Feel how good that feels, your sense of achievement, the relief of having finished it. Look at the choices finishing it has opened up, feel the freedom. Take a few minutes to feel the difference. Compare this to the cost of not taking any action.
5. Now, step off your time-line and look at the process, the steps you took to complete the task, the resources you used, the environment you worked in. Make a mental note of 3 or 4 steps you needed to undertake to complete the task.
6. Step back on to the time line *at the point at which you stepped off it (i.e. the future)* and step over the task back to the present. Look again at the task in front of you, knowing the steps you will take and the feelings you will have after you have completed the task. Walk through these steps, eyes closed if you prefer, and experience doing them. Deal with any feelings of discomfort and distress, and focus on the benefits of adopting your new 'do it now' attitude. Deal with one procrastinating issue at a time. Remember to RETURN TO THE PRESENT (on your timeline) before stepping away.

NB Make sure you return to the present on your time-line before stepping off.