



PROCRASTINATION & CREATIVE
AVOIDANCE TIPS

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As a consultant I often hear from clients that “there isn’t enough time in a day” or “I’m so stressed out” or “the day got away from me” or “I’m stuck and I don’t know where to go next”. We’re talking about procrastination, fear and time management – and recognizing this is the first step to achieving your goals.

I’m presupposing that you’ve done the work on your mission, priorities, and actually have a focused To Do List. If you do not have a focused list, take a few moments to identify one objective you’ve had for yourself but have not completed. The message of this article is focusing your activities in such a way as to get done the things that need to be done – without interruptions. It takes discipline and practice.

How do you currently spend your time? It’s often very hard to examine how you spend your time – it’s an eye-opening experience. To accomplish this, track your time in one hour intervals. Be honest about the time you are idle, or are filling time but are not working towards your principal goals. Write it down – do this over the course of a week.

Getting into action alleviates the stress of procrastination. Ask yourself why you’ve been putting off these goals. Put emotions aside and look at this situation as logically as possible. Your next steps are to complete a list of your creative avoidances and a separate list for your procrastinations. The difference between the two are that procrastinations are the things you need to do that you’re not doing – your goals; and creative avoidances are the things you are doing - the distractions - that are keeping you from doing the things you need to be doing.

When it comes to procrastinating, many of us are experts – personally I weigh every option and “think everything through” – when often all I need to do is take the leap of faith, push past the fear, make a decision and move forward. We justify, rationalize, and redirect our focus to avoid the “difficult” tasks. Creative avoidances include organizing and reorganizing; preparing and repairing; diversions – telephone, e-mail, etc. All of these can take you away from your key goal, and often keep you spinning in a circle and never achieving your goals. Whether it is fear of success, failure, vulnerability, others reaction, or lack of “how to” skills, or lack of belief in yourself, fear can and will get in the way of attaining your goals. Procrastination is just a way to cover up your fears about a certain goal. This procrastination is always some justification and rationalization that seem right at the time. To prevent this justification and rationalization from occurring it’s important to get a reality check on the task at hand.

Once you’ve completed your lists of your creative avoidances and procrastinations it will give you a chance to finally think out and list all those things you really need to do to move yourself forward. And a good place to begin is with what you envision yourself accomplishing by a certain point in time. Write it down, and create the list of tasks required to move you toward that vision. Identify the first or next step towards accomplishing the goal, and commit to a time to start.

The rest is truly a matter of being self-aware – catching yourself when you lean towards a creative avoidance, when you should be focused on the procrastination list. To Do lists help tremendously especially if you can get outside feedback from friends, coaches, consultants, peers, and spouses, they can be helpful in holding you accountable.

Steps:

- Admit that your time needs to be utilized better.
- Honestly log your current time use.
- List your creative avoidances.
- List your procrastinations.
- Create a future vision – where do you see yourself in six months, a year, three years, 5 years?
- Commit to a TO DO LIST that supports your vision.
- Hone the TO DO LIST into a daily task list if it’s overwhelming.
- Select a goal and identify the first or next step to accomplish the goal.
- Commit to a time when you will begin the first step.
- Stay self-aware – recognize your pattern of excuses, don’t get bogged down in an activity that doesn’t support your end goal
- Partner with someone – Joining together with a colleague will keep you focused and on track