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## Keys to Overcoming Procrastination

It's 5 p.m. and everyone's leaving work—except you, because you still have to do the weekly sales report. You knew the deadline but waited too long to get started. Why do you put off doing things until the last minute?

"Many people don't realize procrastination is an automatic habit pattern they use to avoid tension," says William Knaus, Ed.D., a psychologist and author of "The Procrastination Workbook." "It's kicked off by discomfort, such as uncertainty or insecurity. These habit patterns are the barriers to overcoming procrastination."

Dr. Knaus divides these patterns into the following three diversions.



### Mental diversions

If you think, "I can't do it right now because I'm too tired. I'm not alert enough. I won't be able to concentrate well enough. I'll get to it later when I'm better prepared to think more clearly," then you've fallen into a procrastination trap known as the Manana Diversion. You've fooled yourself into thinking that later is different from now and will be better.

### Action diversions

With this barrier, you procrastinate by going to the water cooler, doodling, calling someone on the phone, or doing something else on your computer.

### Emotional diversions

Some office tasks aren't inspiring or motivating -- they're drudgery. If you wait to be inspired to do something you consider a drag, you'll be waiting a long time.

To overcome these barriers, Dr. Knaus recommends the following steps.

### Five-minute system

Commit to the task for five minutes. For example, tell yourself, "I'll work for the next five minutes on gathering the information for developing this report."

Decide whether you'll commit for another five minutes at the end of that five minutes. Continue this pattern until you complete the task, run out of time, or have a good reason to stop.

"By doing the task for at least five minutes, you're already living through the frustrations that are a part of the activity, and you're making a series of forward-moving decisions," says Dr. Knaus.

### **Plan in reverse**

Many people set goals but don't have a plan. To create a clear, directed, and purposeful plan:

First, visualize your goal as a target and imagine shooting an arrow into the target's center. Imagine the arrow's trajectory as you pull it back, release it, and hit the center.

In other words, visualize your outcome first, then work from there. Where do you want to end up? What do you do just before that and before that? By doing this, you're automatically creating a plan, and at the same time, you're reminding yourself the plan is a series of small parts.

### **Building frustration tolerance**

If you develop a high frustration tolerance, you'll achieve more because fewer things burden your mind. You build frustration tolerance by persistently tackling challenging tasks until you complete them.

"Even if you don't overcome the discomfort, you've lived through the frustration, which creates this powerful message: You can organize and direct your activities for a productive result, and you have control over yourself," says Dr. Knaus. "It's better to recognize that doing reasonable things, reasonably, within a reasonable time, gets things done -- and you end up doing rather than stewing."

## **This Month's Webinar**

### **Procrastination: Getting & Staying Motivated**

Everyone procrastinates. Sometimes, a little procrastination is okay - expected, even. But sometimes we get stuck. How do we get unstuck? This seminar will discuss ways to recognize our patterns. Procrastination doesn't have to be a chronic problem. We'll discuss the causes and solutions to our patterns and ways to get motivated!

[Log in](#) any time this month to watch the webinar!

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