

# CONQUERING PROCRASTINATION

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## GUIDEBOOK



# **IMPORTANT**

To begin—Please save this guidebook to your desktop or in another location.

On page 12 there is a schedule that you will need to print out.





How can you get the most out of this writeable guidebook? Research has shown that the more ways you interact with learning material, the deeper your learning will be. Nightingale-Conant has created a cutting-edge learning system that involves listening to the audio, reading the ideas in the workbook, and writing your ideas and thoughts down. In fact, this guidebook is designed so that you can fill in your answers right inside this document.

For each session, we recommend the following:

- ✓ Preview the section of the workbook that corresponds with the audio session, paying particular attention to the exercises.
- ✓ Listen to the audio session at least once.
- ✓ Read the text of the guidebook.

In addition to the exercises and questions, we've created an "ijournal" to make this an even more interactive experience for you. At the end of this guide, you can write down any additional thoughts, ideas, or insights to further personalize the material. Remember, the more you apply this information, the more you'll get out of it.



# INTRODUCTION

There are many misconceptions about procrastination, perhaps the greatest of which is viewing it as some sort of illness, an intractable disease that just won't go away.

Nothing, in fact, could be further from the truth.

Procrastination isn't an illness at all; it isn't something that must be accepted; it isn't something that sufferers must resign themselves to living with forever. Procrastination, instead, is a natural, manageable response to predictable, subduable forces.

The audio program, *Conquering Procrastination: How to Stop Stalling and Start Achieving*, and this guidebook, *The Habits of Producers: Exercises in Getting Results*, begin the process

of defeating procrastination and making time a positive force in your life.

The information and exercises presented here help identify and clarify the fears and issues most commonly found at procrastination's core. They supply you with strategies and lessons for managing stress, developing self-discipline and permanently overcoming procrastination.

Remember that although life is a race against time, time doesn't have to be your enemy. With the proven techniques revealed in this program, learn to eliminate the causes and effects of procrastination—and take advantage of time instead of letting it take advantage of you.

# Redefining Procrastination

Conquering procrastination is easy when you understand that it really isn't your problem. You must remember that you have a six-year-old and a three-year-old child within you, each battling the other, each fighting to get or to do what they want. These two children pull your energy in two different directions. The ambivalence caused by the inner conflict of these two children is procrastination.

Conquering procrastination, then, is mainly a job of integrating the conflicting forces. It requires listening to both parts of you and integrating them. It requires taking a leadership position in running your own life.

Strategies for conquering procrastination—for becoming a producer and a peak performer—will prepare you to cope with your fears in ways that are healthy and productive.

There are three reasons why prior attempts to conquer procrastination may have failed:

- You've thought of yourself as a procrastinator rather than someone who uses procrastination as a way of coping in some areas of his or her life.

- You've been encouraged by well-intentioned but misguided coaches to become more disciplined, to try harder, get organized—just “do it.” Such get-tough schemes sometimes can work temporarily, but usually cause burnout, dried-up motivation and backlash.
- You've identified your worth as a person with your work. If your work isn't perfect, you withhold it in an effort to hide your imperfect self.

Conquering procrastination is about overcoming behavior that keeps you from producing. Instead of concentrating on the negative problems of procrastination, embrace work from the perspective of a peak performer and the efficiency of top producers who take more vacations while getting more work done.

# The Six Warning Signs of Procrastination

When we procrastinate, most of us are unaware of the underlying causes of our behavior. In fact, there are six warning signs that you are headed on the track of procrastination.

For each of the following procrastination signals listed below—illustrated by several identifying questions—rate how much each applies to you. Type the number, using a scale of 1 to 10, 1 meaning not at all and 10 meaning exactly like you, on the line in front of the question.

1. Are you unfulfilled, frustrated, depressed?

Do you:

- Have life goals that you've never completed or even attempted?
- Fear always being a procrastinator?
- Find that you're never satisfied with what you accomplish?
- Continually wonder "Why did I do that?" or "What's wrong with me?"
- Feel deprived—always working or feeling guilty about not working?

|—|—|—|—|—|—|—|—|—|—|  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Does life feel like a long series of obligations that cannot be met?

Do you:

- Keep an impossibly long "to-do" list?
- Talk to yourself in "have to's?"

- Feel powerless with no choice?
- Feel agitated, pressured, continually fearful of being caught procrastinating?
- Suffer from insomnia and have difficulty unwinding at night, on weekends and on vacations (if, in fact, you take vacations)?

|—|—|—|—|—|—|—|—|—|—|  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Are you indecisive and afraid of making a mistake?

Do you:

- Delay completing projects because you try to make them perfect?
- Fear taking responsibility for decisions because you're afraid of being blamed if something goes wrong?
- Demand perfection in your work?
- Expect to be above mistakes and criticism?
- Worry endlessly about "what if"?

|—|—|—|—|—|—|—|—|—|—|  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Are you vague about your goals and values?

Do you:

- Find it difficult to stay committed to any one person or project?

- \_\_\_ Have difficulty knowing what you really want for yourself, but are clear about what you should want?
- \_\_\_ Get easily distracted by another plan that seems to be perfect and free of problems and obstacles?
- \_\_\_ Lack the ability to distinguish between what is the most important use of your time and what is not?

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 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. Are you unrealistic about time?

Do you:

- \_\_\_ Talk about starting on projects in vague terms such as “sometime next week” or “in the fall”?
- \_\_\_ Lose track of how you spend your time?
- \_\_\_ Have an empty schedule without a clear sense of commitments, plans and deadlines?
- \_\_\_ Arrive at meetings and dinners chronically late?
- \_\_\_ Take into account the actual time it takes to drive across town during rush hour?

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 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Does overwhelming anxiety make it difficult for you to sit still and get started?

Do you:

- \_\_\_ Immediately start thinking about food or calling friends when you begin a big project?
- \_\_\_ Find after procrastinating for hours that you finally get into the work at the last minute, when it's too late to do a good job?
- \_\_\_ Doubt your ability to complete the job?
- \_\_\_ Suffer from performance anxiety that causes you to forget everything you practiced when the pressure is on?

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 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## The First C: Choice

By learning to identify your negative internal dialogue or self-talk and to replace it with the positive self-statements of producers, you'll be freeing yourself from feelings of victimhood while gaining empowerment.

The following five phrases are presented, first, in the language of procrastinators/workaholics and, then, in the language of peak performers.

1. Language of Procrastinators/Workaholics: *"I have to..."*  
Language of Peak Performers: *"I choose to ..."*
2. Language of Procrastinators/Workaholics: *"finish"*  
Language of Peak Performers: *"start"*
3. Language of Procrastinators/Workaholics: *"big"*  
Language of Peak Performers: *"small"*
4. Language of Procrastinators/Workaholics: *"perfectly"*  
Language of Peak Performers: *"humanly"*
5. Language of Procrastinators/Workaholics: *"pain"*  
Language of Peak Performers: *"quality living and quality work"*

Thus, putting it all together:

Language of Procrastinators/Workaholics: *"I have to finish something big and important, do it perfectly, suffer lots of pain and be deprived of the good things in life."*

Language of Peak Performers: *"I choose to start on one small step, do it humanly, with plenty of time for quality living."*

Underlying the self-talk of effective producers and peak performers are the Four C's: Choice, Creating safety, Committing and Centering. By learning these four C's, you will be addressing the underlying fears that cause you to procrastinate in the first place. Having healthy ways to cope with your fears means you will not need to use procrastination as a way of coping and you will be rapidly on your way to being an effective, efficient producer.

The first C is Choice. The power of choice is different than wanting to, it's different than having to. Throughout your days, listen to how passive images and powerlessness are created by negative self-talk. By exercising your power of choice, you will give yourself the opportunity to redirect toward constructive effort the energy formerly blocked by feelings of victimhood and resistance.

# The Second C: Create Safety

Creating safety—the second C—is a powerful tool for removing self-generated threats, for bringing peace to yourself.

Ambivalence, procrastination and lack of confidence dissolve when you shift responsibility for your life from the overwhelmed child within you to your strong, adult self who is taking care of business in the real world, making it a safe place to do business in. It is the strong, adult self that provides a psychological safety net, and therefore a relaxation of fear. Once you feel safe, you regain your ability to concentrate on decisions, choices and consequences that can be lived with.

The following exercise details one of the best ways to begin to notice when to change from negative coaching to positive coaching:

- Take a few minutes to imagine starting a project on which you have been procrastinating.

- Close your eyes and imagine that you are in your workplace. Feel the chair and then notice what you are feeling in your body as you think about starting this exercise.
- Is there any tension in your body? Is your breathing open? Is it constricted? What are you thinking? Do you try to soothe yourself? How? Does it help or hurt?
- Now notice how you feel when you take a deep breath and focus on one simple part of the project. Begin to breathe more deeply. Notice how your body responds. How do your thoughts change as your body begins to relax?
- Say to that frightened part of yourself, “Regardless of what happens, you are safe with me. I am on your side.” What happens to your body as you do this? How do you feel?

# The Third C: Commit

Commitment, the third C, means committing to doing what you can do now in order to make yourself highly efficient, focused and fearless—even if another part of you doesn't know how you will finish the task.

Remember that some goal setting can lead to procrastination. Some goals are unrealistic, because you do not have enough time in your day or your week to start on it now. One of the best-kept secrets of highly effective producers is that they never set a goal that they cannot start on today.

When you commit to a goal, be sure that it fits into your priorities and values. If not, let it go. And, once you've committed to that goal, be prepared for distractions—internal and external—that threaten to take you off the

path toward that goal. Finally, always be aware of what contributes to achieving the goal and what detracts from its achievement.

An essential aspect of goal achievement is “three-dimensional thinking,” i.e., really looking at the deadline and coming back from the deadline—by using “backtiming”—into the present, creating subgoals and specific action points along the way.

What is extremely useful about backtiming is that it takes any large task and brings you to a place where you can choose to start on the very first step today. Understanding the concept of working in the present is extremely useful in overcoming procrastination and simply being more efficient in anything you do.

## Effective Goal Setting Self-Quiz

To help you link effective goal setting with effective time management, take the following quiz adapted from Edwin C. Bliss' *Getting Things Done*.

	YES	NO
1. Do I have in <i>writing</i> a clearly defined set of lifetime goals; five-year goals; one-year goals; six-month goals?	_____	_____
2. Do I know when I will start on a lifetime goal? A top-priority? A short-term goal?	_____	_____
3. Do I start on the top-priority task early in my day?	_____	_____
4. Do I set priorities according to the importance of the activity, not of its urgency?	_____	_____



	YES	NO
5. Do I delegate tasks that are not in my area of strength or expertise?	_____	_____
6. Do I have a system for preventing unnecessary intrusion of mail and calls from reaching my desk?	_____	_____
7. Do I have a system for filing that follows the principle, "Do it, Delegate it or Drop it?"	_____	_____
8. Do I have a system for keeping my home and leisure time a haven and sanctuary from the work of the office?	_____	_____
9. Do I make minor decisions quickly, considering the value of my time?	_____	_____
10. Do I summarize the issues and decisions made at meetings, insuring that responsibilities are clearly assigned for follow-through?	_____	_____

Your "NO" answers will indicate where you have difficulties with goals, priorities and time management. Review these questions periodically to insure that you are spending your time on the most important activities for the achievement of your top priorities.

# Scheduling Guilt-Free Play

The “unschedule” is a strategic system of scheduling that builds up an unconscious desire to work more and play less. Your play time actually springboards you into the next period of quality work. Because work is no longer all of your life, you can focus on it for the right period of time.

By using the unschedule, you will immediately reap these benefits:

- You will be more realistic in your time keeping.

- You will begin to experience success by starting in small steps.
- You will own your deadlines.
- You will have a tool that helps you see time in three dimensions.
- You will be committed to guilt-free play.

On the following pages, review the sample unschedules. Then, using the blank form, make an unschedule for yourself.

## Follow These 11 Guidelines to Make Your Own Unschedule

1. Schedule only previously committed time such as commuting, meetings, meals etc.
2. Next, schedule time such as socializing, recreation, classes etc.
3. Do not schedule work on projects until you have completed at least 30 minutes.
4. Only write down projects that have taken the full 30 minutes. This signifies quality time!
5. Reward yourself after each project by taking a break or starting a more desirable task.
6. Total your quality hours worked each day and week and review totals for strengths and weaknesses.
7. Always leave one full day for guilt-free play. This is essential for rejuvenation and maintaining motivation.
8. Take a half hour to work on a project before deciding on guilt-free play. This will motivate you to work, knowing that you will be rewarded when finished. It also creates more leisure time, and it will get your subconscious in the habit of working on projects while you are at play—improving creativity in the process.
9. Focus on starting, not finishing. Finishing will take care of itself if you only begin.
10. Take small steps. Only worry about what you will be doing for the 30 minutes of uninterrupted work.
11. Never take a break (a reward) when you're finishing a segment or you're ready to quit. Always stay with a difficulty for a few extra minutes. Get through the tough spot so that when you start next time it will be easier and you will have positive momentum.

The shaded segments of Joe's Unschedule represent time periods he worked. At the day's end he could easily see what hours he worked and total them. You could also use a highlighter to color code your work and recreation time. This can help you spot work patterns and times of day when you're most productive.

## Joe's Unschedule

Hours	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6-7 A.M.	Sleep	Sleep	Jog	Sleep	Sleep	Jog	Sleep
7-8		Shower/Breakfast/Kids/Paper			→		
8-9		Commute	→		→		
9-10	Jog	Staff Meeting	Mail/Calls	Meeting	Calls	Breakfast Meeting	Breakfast
10-11	Shower/Paper	Calls		↓	Meeting		Flea Market
11-12	Brunch	Staff Contact	Personnel Meeting		↓	Lunch Meeting	
12-1 P.M.	↓		↓		Lunch	↓	
1-2	Beach	Lunch	Bookstore/Lunch	Lunch	↓	↓	Yard Work
2-3	↓	Meeting	Computer Seminar	↓		Staff Contact	
3-4	↓		↓	Staff Contact Meeting	Calls	Mail	Badmitten With Kids
4-5	↓			↓	Meeting		Feed Kids
5-6	Dinner		Commute			Commute	Shower/Change
6-7	Kid's Baths	Handball	Dinner	Commute/errands	Commute	Baseball Game	Dinner w/ wife
7-8	TV	Commute	Gallery Opening	Kids' Soccer	Dinner		↓
8-9	Plan week	Dinner	↓	Pizza out	TV		Brother's B'day Party
9-10	Read	TV	Nightcap	Read	Quiet Time with wife	↓	
10-11	TV	Read	Laundry	Video	Sleep	TV	
11-12	Sleep	Sleep	↓	↓		Sleep	↓
12-1 A.M.			Sleep	Sleep			Music
1-2							Sleep
2-3							
3-4							
4-5							
5-6							
Work							
Subtotals							
Total							

from The Now Habit by Neil Fiore, Ph.D. (1989, Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc.)

*Print out this page and use it to help you integrate the habits of a producer into your life.*

## The Now Habit Unschedule

Hours	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6-7 A.M.							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12							
12-1 P.M.							
1-2							
2-3							
3-4							
4-5							
5-6							
6-7							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12							
12-1 A.M.							
1-2							
2-3							
3-4							
4-5							
5-6							
Work							
Subtotals							
Total							

from The Now Habit by Neil Fiore, Ph.D. (1989, Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc.)

# The Fourth C: Centering

The fourth C, centering, is a way of entering what peak-performance researchers call the “flow” state and what athletes call “the zone.” Working in the flow state is a powerful tool for focusing on the task before you.

The following is a simple focusing exercise to help you enter the flow state. It can be used throughout your day and easily accommodated into your busy schedule. Use it before calling difficult clients, between meetings and presentations and when you need to calm down after an upsetting confrontation or an aggravating commute.

- Sit upright in a chair, with your feet flat on the floor and with your hands on your thighs. (Do not attempt to do this exercise while driving.)
- Focus your attention on your breathing. Breathe deeply, holding your breath for a moment. Exhale slowly and completely, counting “one.”
- Repeat this process twice more: breathing deeply, holding your breath, then exhaling slowly and completely, counting “two” and “three.”
- Focus attention on the feeling of the chair supporting your back, your hips and your legs. Let the chair really support you as you release any unnecessary muscle tension.
- Continue to exhale the tension away. Give yourself the gift of relaxation and support.
- Notice how your eyelids are beginning to feel. If you experience them getting heavier, allow them to float softly closed over your eyes.

- With your next three slow, deep breaths, tell yourself to let go of all thoughts and images about work from the past.
- With your next three slow, deep breaths, let go of what you anticipate happening in the future.
- With your next three, slow deep breaths, notice—just notice—that it really doesn’t take much energy to just be in the present, letting go of trying to be in any particular time, letting go of striving to be any particular way.
- With your next three slow, deep breaths, begin to access the power of your entire brain, bringing the flow state under your conscious control.

Use the following positive suggestions while counting up from one to three to stimulate your interest in the process of starting on quality work.

- While counting “one” say to yourself, silently, “With each breath I become more alert, curious and interested in how rapidly I’ll be going beyond any concerns about finishing and getting started with purpose and commitment in just a few seconds of time.”
- While counting up to two, say to yourself, silently, “Becoming more and more alert and ready to begin as I tap into the inner wisdom of my mind and many, many alternative solutions.”
- While counting up to three, say to yourself, silently, “Coming all the way up to alertness, operating at a genius level with the support of my entire brain and my creative faculty, ready and eager to begin, ready to open my eyes at the count of three.”

# Practicing the Art of Balance

Really knowing your true priorities is an important aspect of conquering procrastination, because when we're procrastinating we tend to have a false sense of time.

It is a myth that time is money. In fact, time is much more precious than money. It is a non-renewable resource. But, without balance in our lives, we tend to get caught up in the illusion that working longer and harder will gain us more time. Of course, that just isn't true. It's extremely important for us to know what is important and what is not important. If we are to truly conquer procrastination, we must not live our lives like a constant to-do list.

The following are seven strategies for maintaining balance in your life. These are followed by further "tips for balance."

## The Art of Balance: Seven Strategies

### 1. Do the right work.

Decide what is your bottom-line work—what is important, not merely urgent. Avoid the workaholic syndrome of continually putting out fires.

### 2. Distinguish ego-oriented work from results-oriented work.

Ego-defensive work is usually unnecessary. Often 50% of some tasks can be eliminated by concentrating on what really has to be done to simply complete the task, rather than on trying to avoid criticism or to prove that you deserve praise.

### 3. Think small.

Rather than overwhelming yourself with

the expectation of doing 60—or even 8—hours of work to finish the job, focus on when you can find just 30 minutes to get started on it.

### 4. Preprogram your brain with solutions.

When you are stuck, overwhelmed or tired, take 2 – 5 minutes to brainstorm about how the job might be tackled, divided up, delegated or reduced. And focus on a specific time when you will start.

### 5. Go from overwhelm to overview.

When you first approach a large task, your mind will call for enough energy to try to finish it all at once. Use this agitated level of energy to overview the entire task and create a Reverse Calendar back from the future deadline to the starting point. Assign "start-lines" instead of deadlines to do-able segments of the task leading back to when you can start today.

### 6. Don't procrastinate on living.

You cannot put your life on hold. It will backfire and reduce your efficiency and productivity. Remember to eat, sleep and exercise well, and to make yourself leave the office for lunch, to walk, to take a break.

### 7. Keep the big picture in mind.

Insist on time for your life, your family, your church, your career and yourself. Avoid the temptation to get lost in trying to do more work. Live now—a few minutes each day, a few hours each weekend—in order to keep from burning out and resenting your work.



## Tips For Balance

- Give yourself one extra minute or drop one “last-minute” chore before starting your commute or your next assignment.
- Take a 10-minute walk before starting work.
- When starting your car, take three deep breaths (about 15 seconds total) before throwing your car into gear.
- Honor transitions with 6 – 12 deep breaths (30 – 60 seconds) as you let go of the last project and start on a new activity.
- In the tradition of the Sabbath or Shabat have nothing scheduled for at least four hours every weekend.
- Plan two hours for lunch with friends every two weeks.
- Give yourself an extra 30 minutes at the gym.
- Shut the television off early, and give yourself an hour just to think.
- Cut out one “I have to” from today’s to-do list.
- Focus on just one thing for at least 15 minutes without interruption.
- Eliminate one stop from your mad dash to accomplish all your chores in one trip in one hour.

## Coping with Worry

Optimal performers in business and sports develop skills for dealing rapidly with distractions while remaining focused on their goals.

Distraction simply means that there is something you'd rather be concentrating on than the project in front of you. Your mind is continually processing data and sensations for your protection, for your growth and your enlightenment. Yet there are times when the thoughts and images crossing your conscious mind seem more disruptive than useful.

Most distractions can be dealt with after you complete 30 minutes of quality work. That's the beauty of working for limited, concentrated periods of time. You can delay almost anything for 30 minutes, even returning telephone calls.

There are a few common forms of distraction that tend to lead to procrastination. They involve the time-travelling aspects of your mind, thinking of something in the past and critically saying, "You should have done this" or "If only you hadn't done that." The mind can also travel into the future and worry about potential mistakes or the danger of criticism from others.

This part of you is asking for safety. It is asking for you to complete the work of worrying, to create a plan about what you're going to do if the worst happens.

Whenever you find yourself anxious and worried to the point of distraction, answer the following questions:

- What are you worried about?
- What is the worst that could happen?
- What could you do if the worst really happened? What is the plan? How will you create safety for yourself even if the worst happened?
- How could you lessen the pain if you experienced another loss?
- How could you get on to as much happiness as is possible after this kind of change in your life?

Now that you are aware of your potential distractions, use them to help recenter yourself, to recommit to your goals and to rechoose your work. With the knowledge that a strong, creative part of you is working hard for you 24 hours a day, you can return, undisturbed, to the work before you.

# From Procrastination to Peak Performance

Conquering procrastination is about becoming a peak performer in your work, in your sports, in your life. It requires a certain amount of hardiness. What distinguishes a champion from others of comparable ability is knowing how to bounce back from disappointing performances. Becoming a champion or a consistent producer requires that you forgive yourself of mistakes while maintaining a sense of inner worth strong enough to solve problems, to pick up the pieces and to continue your commitment to your values and your goals.

The following exercise, in three parts, uses visualization to help you get a handle on the full experience of your future success.

- Imagine that five years have passed from this very day. It is five years in the future. Nothing has changed in your life. Aloud, state the year (five years in the future) and say, “Nothing much has changed over the last five years. I’m still working at (name the place). My living situation is still the same. I’m still working on the same relationship, psychological and emotional issues.”
- Really get a picture in your mind of everything being the same. Notice how that makes you feel. Is it okay that nothing has changed? Is it intolerable to think that some things have remained just as they are? Notice how you might be motivated to focus on those aspects of your life that must begin to change.
- Again, imagine that it is five years from this very day. This time, imagine there have been wonderful, positive changes in all areas of your life in those five years. You are your ideal weight. You are confident and energetic. You feel good about the contributions you are making to the world.
- Imagine yourself—the same confident, energetic person you imagined yourself to be in the previous step—at a celebration surrounded by all of your loved ones: new friends you’ve made over the last five years, friends you’ve had for a much longer time, family members. The celebration is in your ideal home. You begin to tell those gathered about the wonderful journey you’ve been on in your life over the last five years, the changes you’ve made, what things moved you toward the wonderful, positive place where you are currently living your life.
- Tell them where you were five years ago. Let them know something about the transition you made, perhaps from feeling like a procrastinator to seeing things in a new way, to bringing together your energies, to getting rid of ambivalence and inner conflict.

## Developing Planned Set-Backs

As you begin to experience your ability to conquer procrastination more easily, you will notice yourself bouncing back from set-backs more rapidly. With a new sense of control over your fears, over ambivalence and with an integrated sense of self, you are more willing to try something new.

Initially, however, you might find yourself reverting back to old escape patterns, to your procrastination habits. By simply noticing that you are reverting to your old habits, you are making a significant advance. Being aware of your choices prepares you to successfully rechannel the energy of the old habit into the building of a new, more productive habit.

The following is an exercise in planned set-back rehearsal. It will help you switch more readily and confidently from the old pattern to the new.

- Choose a project you typically procrastinate on.
- Notice the symptoms of procrastination, and your feelings of being overwhelmed by this project.
- Identify your distracting self-talk or any compulsion to avoid the project by “getting more organized” or learning more about it. Watch any other attempts to escape into procrastination.
- Consciously choose to procrastinate for an hour. Resist the urge to return to work. Really indulge those feelings. Try to enjoy your procrastination and

notice if it is guilt-free.

- Observe your self-talk as you procrastinate.
- Create a Plan B to go to when there is a block. Know how you will calm yourself. Change your self-talk.
- Use the focusing exercise of the flow state to help you rapidly and efficiently make the transition from being overwhelmed to being focused.

The following split-screen exercise will let you use the power of visualization to really get your teeth into the image of success.

- Be seated, close your eyes and get comfortable. Begin to breathe slowly and deeply. Float down into your chair, which this time is the chair in a very big, very safe, very comfortable theater.
- Lights come up on the screen, which is divided into three parts. On the left panel of the screen, a light comes on that represents now. You see yourself full length as you are now. Sitting in the theater, you understand this person. You know the fears, experiences, regrets, hopes. Really let this person know that you are there for him or her.
- The light goes down on that panel of the screen and comes up on the far-right panel. You see yourself six or twelve months from now, the way you wish to be. You are in an ideal state, having



achieved your goals. See the way you hold your body. See your sense of confidence and energy. See your gratitude for that success. Understand this person. Get a sense of what it's like to have the results of your goals.

- The light goes down on that panel of the screen and comes up on the middle panel. You see yourself in transition. You see yourself heading toward your ideal place, committed to your path. Acknowledge any doubts. Have compassion for this person.

- Stay with the feeling as the light comes down over the screen and the lights come up in the theater. Incorporate the sense of bringing together your future and your past, to being in the moment of transition, committed to your goals.
- Take three slow, deep breaths—counting up from one—and open your eyes at three.

## Managing Procrastination in Your Life

All of us work with and live with people who procrastinate. In order to avoid falling into the role of nag with these people, remember that procrastinators are better at criticizing themselves and nagging themselves than you could ever be.

To work effectively with people who procrastinate, managers must keep in mind the three main issues that cause employees to procrastinate:

- **Feeling like a victim**
- **Being overwhelmed by multiple demands**
- **Fear of failure and criticism**

Effective managers deal with procrastinators by:

- **Fostering commitment rather than compliance**

*An example of compliance would be: You'd better be finished by noon—you must get this done in time, or else!*

*Whereas commitment would be: How much can you complete by noon?*

- **Focusing on starting rather than finishing**

*An emphasis on "finishing" would be: When will you finish this project? You must have it to me by next week.*

*Whereas "starting" would be: When can you start a rough draft? I need this by Friday.*

- **Giving constructive encouragement rather than criticism**

*An example of criticism would be: Why did you do that? What's wrong with you?*

*Whereas constructive encouragement would be: I really liked what you did with the Jones account and I think you can achieve even better results if you follow the usual deadlines for informing the central office.*

- **Being decisive in your management priorities rather than indecisive**

*An example of indecisive management would be: Forget what I told you yesterday, just get started on this.*

*Whereas decisive management would be: Find someone to whom you can delegate your other responsibilities so that you can give your full attention to this new priority.*

- **Being fair and frequent in your rewards**

*An example of a specific, rewarding phrase would be: You did a great job handling that difficult client, Joe!*

*Rather than: You do good work Joe.*



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