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MOTIVATION

TAKING ACTION ON YOUR GOALS

The Wisdom

STRATEGIES FOR PRODUCTIVITY

PART #3



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PLEASE CONSULT A PROVINCIAL RECOGNIZED OR BOARD CERTIFIED TRUSTED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL
SURROUNDING YOUR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH.

PRODUCTIVE

State of Mind



You may constantly be finding yourself filled with life altering ideas, ***but you can't seem to get into your 'zone,'*** and execute your plan of action ***without procrastinating.*** Find out ***time consuming ways of how to increase your productivity*** and be in your flow.

You're not alone when it comes satisfying your *instant gratification monkey*. In other words compromising your time and decreasing your productivity levels to fulfill your urge to do meaningless tasks that may feel more satisfying. Yes, we all do this. You don't have to feel badly about this, but if you do it often, it's time for you to recognize this limiting behaviour of yours and better tap into why you're really holding off on doing important tasks.

No doubt, you deserve a break at times, but really you've probably found yourself taking more breaks and making less checkmarks on your 'must-do' list.

SELF LIMITING BEHAVIOURS

Limited focus on task completion comes down to procrastination which is the practice of intentionally delaying something that should be done. For a long time researchers thought procrastination had to do with time management skills, but Tim Pychyl, an associate professor of psychology at Carleton University shares that research across a wide range of studies has found that procrastination is associated with emotional regulation. Chronic procrastinators typically feel emotions such as guilt and shame about their behaviour.* Common characteristics that procrastinators exhibit are:

- **Low conscientiousness-** laid back, impulsive, relaxed about

time-keeping and less goal orientated.

- **Perfectionist tendencies**

- Perfectionism stems from fear of disapproval and even from being frequently praised for accomplishments, whereby one may feel pressure to keep achieving high standards of work. Social researcher, Brene Brown says, "Perfection is not about healthy achievement and growth." She explains that perfectionism is used by many people as a shield to protect against the pain of blame, judgment, or shame.

- **Larger amygdala volume**

- fMRI images have shown that chronic procrastinators are susceptible to fight or flight due to high emotions during learning.

BY KEEPING YOURSELF PRESENT AND FOCUSED ON THE PROCESSES RATHER THAN THE FINAL OUTCOME, YOU'LL BE IN A MORE PRODUCTIVE STATE.

- **Exhibit negative emotions such as guilt, shame, boredom, anxiety, frustration** - procrastination becomes an emotional coping mechanism. Habit forming by immediate short-term rewards temporarily stops the negative emotions, but does not help to permanently self-regulate emotions.

FOCUS ON TAKING SMALL ACTIONS STEPS

A 2020 study published in *Frontiers in Psychology* cites, "Procrastination is associated with experiences of persistent stress and negative emotions, including anxiety, distress, depression, and hopelessness." · Procrastinators choose an emotion-orientated style instead of task-orientated style of completing tasks. Therefore, they tend to lack focus in pursuing goals for the long-term.

One way for procrastinators to self-regulate their emotions and to become more goal orientated is to apply the self-determination theory developed by researchers Demi and Ryan which reveal; for an individual to be motivated to accomplish any task they must feel: relatedness, competent, and autonomous. One way to do this is by aligning their interests and skills with the task at hand and outlining a small action step to take day-by-day rather than focusing on the entire task. This strategy serves to be less overwhelming.

GOAL-SETTING THEORY

In 1990, Edwin A. Locke, a psychologist and Dr. Gary Latham published a book, '*A Theory of Goal Setting and Task Performance*', which outlined five characteristics for successful goal-setting:

1. **Clarity** - set clear goals to measure your goals accurately to help you progress towards the goal.
2. **Challenge** - set challenging goals that generate your interest and pushes you outside of your comfort zone.
3. **Commitment** - establish your *why*, understand the importance of your goal, use visualization to help you.
4. **Feedback** - goals need to be quantifiable. Approach people in your circle for feedback. This helps to keep your goal on track
5. **Task Complexity** - break down the process into smaller action steps. It will keep you motivated and focused.

Goal-setting is a vital part of anyone's success and it can help reduce tendencies to procrastinate by bringing more ease and focus. The process of goal-setting builds momentum which can also help individuals become more *consciousness* and better self-regulate their emotions. Overall, by applying simple rules of goal-setting, overall performance and productivity is surely to improve.



DO YOU NEED TO TRADE IN YOUR PROCRASTINATION TENDENCIES FOR GOAL-SETTING HABITS? (IF YOU AGREE WITH MOST OF THESE, YOU MAY NEED TO UP YOUR GOAL-SETTING GAME)

- You procrastinate often on major tasks
- You need to be perfect at everything you do
- You get overwhelmed at the big picture
- You have trouble motivating yourself
- Most projects/work don't appear to be fun to you
- You are underutilizing your skills on tasks
- You don't feel empowered to complete certain tasks
- You lack self-discipline and/or emotional regulation
- You're too focused on short-term rewards than long-term success

HERE ARE 10 EFFECTIVE GOAL-SETTING STRATEGIES

#1 Write down your goals on paper. That's right, studies reveal that when you write down your goals on paper, you'll likely carry them out because cognitively you'll remember your goals and stay focused.

#2 Use the SMART method. Set goals that are: specific (clear), measurable, attainable, relevant and timely

#3 Create small, daily goals. Break down your goals into smaller and more manageable action items that you can focus on completing by the day rather than getting overwhelmed by the bigger task.

#4 Make checkboxes next to your goals. As you complete your tasks and check off the checkboxes next to your goals, the reward centre of your brain 'lights up,' and you get motivated to accomplish your other goals.

#5 Batching. Create goals to complete your bigger tasks at the start of your day when you are likely to be the most productive and work on your smaller tasks later in the day.

#6 Pomodoro Technique. Chunk your smaller goals into doing 25 minute blocks. This is a time management technique, but it works well with goal-setting.

#7 Reward yourself. Satisfy your extrinsic needs by treating yourself to something after you have accomplished a goal.

#8 Create organization goals. Before you start a project, outline your working conditions and how you can eliminate distractions i.e. closing tabs on your laptop that are unnecessary.

#9 Visualize. Allow yourself to see your goal attainment. This will motivate you to further take action.

#10 Reflect on your goals. Spend five minutes each day reviewing your day's goals and writing out what worked and what needs to be revised. This will push you out of your comfort zone and give you challenges to work towards.