

John McGrail, Ph.D.
2001 S. Barrington Avenue, Suite 308
Los Angeles, CA, 90025

About 700 words
First Online Serial Rights
©2013 John McGrail

Overcoming Procrastination; What Are You Waiting For?

Beating procrastination can literally lead to a whole new life— all it takes is a desire to change, a decision to act, and a little help from your subconscious mind.

By John McGrail, PhD

Ask any random group of people what they'd like to change in their life and chances are you will hear a great list of worthy goals: Find a new job, better relationships, make more money, stop smoking, lose weight, build confidence, de-clutter my life, etc. Chances are just as likely that these same people will provide a million reasons as to why they haven't started *doing* anything about it yet. Ask why and you will very likely hear something like, "Oh, yeah, I plan to get to it— tomorrow... next week... sometime, but..." Famous last words.

Most all of us at some time experience the pain of procrastinating— and it is painful because procrastinating prevents us from doing or becoming better; from living a richer, fuller life; from attaining goals we know would make us happier and more fulfilled. Why do we do this to ourselves?

For some procrastinators, “non-doing” represents not having to deal with success or failure and the personal issues (new expectations) either would bring. The subconscious thinking might be: "If I wait until the last minute and fail, then my failure wasn't caused by my own inability or shortcoming, but instead by a lack of time." For others, the thought pattern might go something like: "If I wait until the last minute I might fail, and then I won't have to deal with any new expectations of me that would accompany my success." Or, “If I don't do anything, I cannot fail; nothing will happen to me, I'm safe.” Safe maybe, but in a very deep rut.

Some people procrastinate for extra validation, waiting until the last minute and then "pulling it off" (whatever "it" is) brings that extra validation; "I must be pretty good; after all, look what I just did." And if they don't pull “it” off, once again there is a handy excuse— not enough time— that places the cause and responsibility for the lack of results away from the individual.

The occasional procrastinator can generally overcome the inertia of resistance to change; his or her bouts of procrastination may be nothing more than a minor nuisance, a mosquito in the tent of life that she can track down and swat away. For the chronic procrastinator though, the behavior creates an endless cycle of suffering, and the disappointment and guilt of having let himself and sometimes his friends and loved ones down... again.

The cycle of chronic procrastination can lead to a spiraling crash of self esteem and a feeling of abject failure. Thankfully, it is also a cycle that can be broken. It begins with a conscious desire to end the pain and a willingness to act upon the desire and identify the cause or causes for the behavior, which are learned, and once learned, which reside in the subconscious mind, the engine of behavior.

What is required then, is to have the subconscious mind, the engine of behavior, *unlearn* the old patterns and attitudes and re-learn new positive ones. For most people this process will require assistance, but with that help and the right tools, we can desensitize a client to his or her fears of failure and/or success, eradicating the subconscious link between failure and self esteem, then re-teach new positive attitudes, for instance that any given “failure” is nothing more than part of the process of learning and growing. With appropriate reinforcement the new response becomes a new subconscious belief and behavioral pattern every bit as automatic as the old negative pattern of procrastination was.

We all deserve a happy, productive and fulfilling life and procrastination does not have to stand in the way. Rid of procrastination, a person can engage in the excitement and adventure that creating and attaining goals can provide! I work with a lot of procrastinators and every day I see these clients literally transforming themselves into the achievers they wish to be— and often very quickly. The process is as natural as watching a good movie. So, once again, what are you waiting for?