

HOW TO BEAT PROCRASTINATION

An Amazing Marvin Guide



OVERVIEW

THE ROADMAP TO BEATING PROCRASTINATION

- Understanding what procrastination is
- Having a supporting organization system
- Avoiding reinforcing behaviors
- Understanding your own procrastination
- Using specific tools & strategies
- Re-training your brain
- Shifting mindsets
- Strengthening your prefrontal cortex



B A S I C S

WHAT IS PROCRASTINATION?

Procrastination is the needless delay of an intended action.

When there is something you need to do (or want to do) and you are delaying doing it for no good reason other than you just don't feel like doing it, you are procrastinating.

It doesn't matter what you are doing instead. Whether you watch TV, play video games, do chores or any other task.

Procrastination is all about the irrational avoidance of a task or activity.



B A S I C S

WHY DO PEOPLE PROCRASTINATE?

**Procrastination is a natural tendency of humans.
Everyone procrastinates sometimes.**

Procrastination happens because you still have ancient brain parts that affect your behavior. This ancient brain has evolved over millions of years and is optimized for survival. Basically, It just tries to keep you from dying.

The best way it knows how to do that is to keep you away from anything that is scary, too uncertain or has a low chance of reward compared to how much energy it requires. That was a proven recipe in dangerous times where food was scarce and dangers lurked behind every corner.

When you procrastinate it is your ancient brain part trying to keep you away from a task that it deems dangerous or a waste of energy. Whenever you feel negative emotions around a task this avoidance instinct gets triggered.



B A S I C S

CAN PROCRASTINATION BE FIXED?

Procrastination doesn't have to ruin your life.

While the instinct to avoid anything that makes you feel bad will always be there, you have a powerful and more modern part of the brain called the prefrontal cortex that is able to override this instinct.

The prefrontal cortex is where your higher thoughts and functions come from. It's where you set goals and plan the future.

The key to not succumbing to inaction is to strengthen your prefrontal cortex and practice this overriding. There are also ways to minimize negative emotions surrounding a task in the first place to avoid triggering the avoidance instinct.

This guide will outline how to do all this using mindset strategies, action methods and even a training program.

With patience and dedication, the procrastination habit can be significantly reduced. Sometimes even within just a few days.



B A S I C S

DO SOME PEOPLE PROCRASTINATE MORE THAN OTHERS?

Some people are more prone to procrastination in general, but procrastination can suddenly become an issue for anyone.

Ultimately, procrastination is a habit. Like any habit we can strengthen and weaken it. Anyone can develop a procrastination habit as we all have an ancient brain part.

There are certain factors that make it more likely for someone to develop a procrastination habit:

If you tend to be stressed easily, have had trauma, executive function weaknesses (due to illness, poor health, genetics etc.), anxiety, depression, certain mindsets or low self esteem you can slip into a procrastination habit more easily.

Basically, the more easily and intensely you feel negative emotions, and the less strong your prefrontal cortex is, the more you are at risk of procrastinating.



B A S I C S

KEY PROCRASTINATION FACTS

- When a task elicits negative emotions, your instinct is to avoid it
- You can override this instinct and take action by using your prefrontal cortex and tolerating the negative emotions
- Procrastination is a habit that you can strengthen or weaken
- Procrastination can be controlled by approaching it from different angles

YOU NEED TO KNOW THIS
ANTI PROCRASTINATION
BASICS



ORGANIZATION

HAVING A SUPPORTING SYSTEM

Having an organizational system in place to manage your tasks and time will go a long way in your journey to beat procrastination.

A good system will reduce your stress and overwhelm, help you prioritize and allow you to catch yourself in the act of procrastination more often so you can apply a specific method to deal with it.

The simplest system is to write down 3-5 tasks each day that you want to get done. Make sure the tasks are short enough so you can complete them in one session (5-45 min). Break down any larger task until you get these bite-sized action steps.

Additionally, you can be a bit more specific when you want to do the tasks, assigning a time to them. Trying to do one or two tasks first thing in the morning is a proven strategy. Your willpower is highest in the morning and starting the day off with success gives you confidence for the rest of the day.

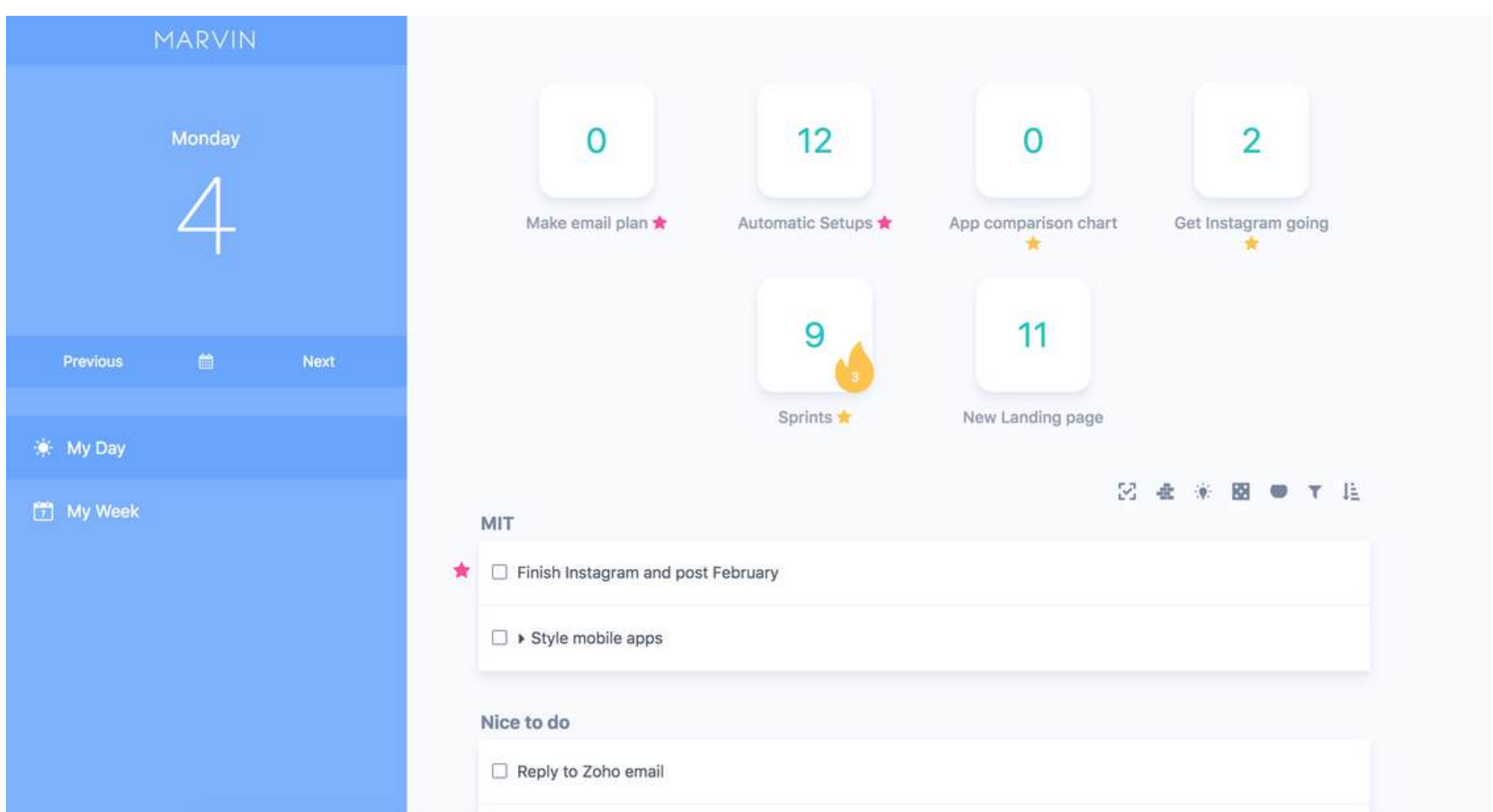


ORGANIZATION

HAVING A SUPPORTING SYSTEM

[Amazing Marvin](#) is a really flexible productivity app I built for procrastinators with many helpful strategies built in. But you can use any app that you enjoy using that gives you a sense of being in control of your workload.

Some people also prefer paper. There is no right or wrong. Experiment with different things and see how they make you feel





STOP THE CYCLE

UNDERSTANDING THE RE-INFORCEMENT LOOP

Getting stuck in a procrastination loop is super easy because procrastination is a self-rewarding behavior.

If you ever trained a dog or raised a child you know any behavior that gets rewarded gets repeated.

The problem with procrastination is that it is a self-rewarding behavior. This means whenever you procrastinate, your brain gets rewarded for it, which makes it more likely you will do it again.

Avoiding a negative emotion/task makes you immediately feel better. If you distract yourself from the task with a rewarding behavior like playing a video game, doing an easy task or browsing the Internet, the reward is even greater.

This makes it terribly easy to fall into a procrastination habit and is why some tasks become nearly impossible to do just because we have avoided it already many times and got rewarded for doing so each time.

Being aware of this self-reinforcement is an important key to beating procrastination.



DO IT ANYWAY

YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEEL LIKE IT

If you wait until you want to do something, you will never do it.

Without being aware of what procrastination is, we automatically fall into the trap of avoiding a task because that is what our brain tells us to do.

Often we rationalize why this must mean it is not a good time to do it. So we resolve to do it tomorrow.

The problem is that tomorrow the task feels equally unappealing or even worse (because we already avoided it once).

If you feel resistance to a task now, you will almost certainly feel the resistance the next time you try to do it. Realizing this can be immensely helpful.

You don't have to wait until you feel like doing something (which likely never happens), instead you have to do something despite not feeling like it. That is what will break the procrastination habit long-term.



GET OVER THE HUMP

STARTING IS THE HARDEST PART

A task never feels as bad as you think.

One super important thing to always keep in mind is that a task practically never feels as bad as your brain tells you it will.

One you start a dreaded task you will almost certainly feel that it isn't as bad as you anticipated.

So the height of any negative emotion you feel is before or at the beginning of the task. And as you continue working on the task you will feel better and better.

Understanding this and reminding yourself regularly about this (maybe via sticky notes) should encourage you to get started on a task.



LOVE & FORGIVE

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF COMPASSION

Forgive yourself for not being perfect.

Research has shown that self compassion plays a big role in overcoming procrastination.

Procrastinators are often very harsh with themselves and beat themselves up over not getting enough (or anything) done.

This creates a ton of negative emotions and pressure to succeed, which makes procrastination even worse.

Simply being kind to yourself and having compassion for why you are struggling to get things done will go a long way in actually helping you get more done.

The importance of this really can't be overstated. Google "self compassion procrastination" and read through the research.



STOP THE SPIRALING **NEGATIVE SPIRALS**

You might have noticed that procrastination can quickly spiral out of control. This is because procrastination is a habit and habits get stronger the more you do them. The other reason is that procrastination causes a lot of bad feeling and bad feelings cause procrastination. So it's a positive feedback loop.

This spiraling concept is important to understand so that you can try and stop the procrastination spiral when you notice yourself slipping.

To stop yourself from spiraling any small progress you can make will halt the spiral. So try to work for just 5 min on a project you are dreading or do one small task you are procrastinating so you can slow or stop the spiraling.

Forgiving yourself (see previous page) is another key in stopping the spiral.



GET A SPIRAL GOING

POSITIVE SPIRALS

You might have also experienced the positive spiraling effect. When you are productive you can really get into your work and stay productive all day or even for days.

A positive spiral works the same way a negative spiral does. When you get work done, you feel good and confident, which helps you to do more work. Getting work done feels good so your brain wants more of that reward, pushing you into action again.

This spiraling is also partially why many people observe an ebb and flow pattern when it comes to productivity. You are super productive for a few days or weeks only to then be incredibly unproductive for a while (poor energy management is another reason).

UNDERSTAND YOURSELF

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT YOUR PROCRASTINATION PATTERNS



RAISING AWARENESS

UNDERSTAND YOURSELF

Try to raise self awareness throughout your anti procrastination journey.

While the basic mechanisms of procrastination are always the same (avoiding negative emotions & low reward activities), there are endless variations of what specific activities people procrastinate, what negative emotions are driving the procrastination and the details of the behavior patterns.

It is important to put your own procrastination under the microscope to try and understand yourself better.

The more you understand why YOU procrastinate, the more targeted your approach to fixing it will be.



DIG DEEPER

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

To help you dig deeper on your procrastination. Take some time to answer these questions (write it all down).

Tip: Going through the questions with someone you are close with can offer even more insights.

- 1) Write down any tasks you are procrastinating right now (usually it's things that are weighing on you)
- 2) Are there any types of activities you often procrastinate on? (paying bills, doing laundry, studying Math, writing blog posts)
- 3) Is there anything you wanted to try or achieve for a long time and never get around to it? (losing weight, getting healthy, starting a business, learning to sing etc.)



QUESTIONS CONTINUED

- 4) For each task, activity and goal write down what negative emotions you feel around it. (See [this list](#) for some ideas)
- 5) Notice any patterns? Any negative emotions that come up a lot?
- 6) Why do you think you feel certain emotions a lot? What could be some underlying reasons? (mindsets, beliefs, past experiences)
- 7) What do you do when you are avoiding these tasks? Waste time, keep busy or something else?
- 8) Do you have an organization system in place? (Task manager, planner etc.) If not, why not?
- 9) How is procrastination negatively affecting your life? How important is it for you to get a handle on this?

TIPS & TRICKS

ACTIONABLE STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU BEAT YOUR PROCRASTINATION



STRATEGY

THE 5 MINUTE RULE

When you notice you are dreading a task, decide to only do the task for 5 min.

The focus is on “starting” and not “finishing” the task. This drastically lowers the action barrier.

Once you start you will likely see that the task is not as bad as you thought and you will have prevented the reinforcement of the procrastination habit. A win-win.

The 5 minute rule is a great habit to get into. If you get good at it, taking action on all kinds of tasks will get easier and easier.



STRATEGY

TESTING THE WATERS

This is a similar strategy to the 5-min rule but the rules are different.

Whenever you dread a task and the avoidance starts to kick in, make this bargain with yourself: you will simply test out the task to see if it is as bad as you feel it is going to be.

If it is too uncomfortable you can stop at any time. But you have to at least try it.

The nice thing about procrastination is that thinking about doing a dreadful task is always much worse than actually doing it. Once you get started, for many tasks the resistance simply melts away and you might even get some positive feelings such as feeling competent in being able to take action.



STRATEGY

COUNTDOWN

This is a strategy that becomes more effective the more often you do it.

The idea is that before you get started on a task you have a countdown and the moment the countdown is finished you jump into action.

This trick prevents overthinking, which often leads to us thinking our way out of a task.

You will also create an association of “action” with the countdown which makes this more effective the more you use it. Instead of counting down from 5, you can also use a mantra and a clap as your action behavior.



STRATEGY

THE FIRST STEP

If you just can't get started on a task, write down the very first thing you have to do to get this task started and then do only this first step.

Here are some examples of first steps for larger tasks:

- Writing a paper → open your text editor
- Doing the dishes → turn on the water in the sink
- Filing taxes → gather the tax form
- Writing a blog post → open the blog dashboard and press "new post"
- Exercising → grab dumbbells or put on sneakers

This strategy is great because it forces you to engage with the task mentally ("what does this task entail?"), gets you over the hardest part ("getting started"), avoids the reinforcing behavior and shows you that the task is safe.

The first step is so small and harmless, that you can likely always take it.



STRATEGY

BREAKING IT DOWN

If you notice you are putting off a large task (aka project), focus first on breaking it down into smaller steps. Make this your first task and don't worry about doing the tasks yet. That will feel much easier once you have broken everything down.

Attempting to break a large task down as a first step is also great because it will make you realize right away if you don't actually know how to do a certain task. And uncertainty is a common factor in procrastination.

Check out [this article](#) on how to break down any large task.



STRATEGY

ANALYZE IT

When you feel resistance towards a task it can be helpful to just sit with the task and think through these questions:

- What negative emotions am I feeling around this task?
- How long would this task take me?
- How will I feel once this is done?
- Why do I want to do this task?
- What is the first step of this task?

You can go deeper on each question, ask follow-up questions to get a deeper understanding of why you are procrastinating this task.

Just engaging with a task at this level can disarm it. Use this in combination with the other techniques to push yourself into action.



STRATEGY

SCHEDULED TIME WASTING

Research has shown that actively scheduling time to “waste time” (browse facebook, scroll Pinterest) into our days reduces procrastination behavior for the rest of the day.

In the studies they aimed for about 2h of scheduled time wasting.

All you do is figure out ahead of time when you are going to surf the web, play games or do whatever you like to do when you are not working, and schedule this into your calendar or daily to-do list.

For this to be effective you HAVE to stick to the time wasting schedule. Do this and watch the magic happen.

Read [this article](#) for more about why this strategy works.



STRATEGY

IMPLEMENTATION INTENTION

An implementation intention is a specific intention on when and how you are going to do a task.

Studies have shown that having an implementation intention makes it more likely you will do a task.

For example, make a commitment the night before to put the dishes away right after you finished dinner.

Or decide that from 9am to 10am you will work on that report you have been putting off.

The more specific, the better.

If you want a certain action to become more of a habit, challenge yourself to do the intended behavior 20 days in a row without fail at the predetermined moment.



STRATEGY

BREATHING

Whenever you feel anxiety or fear around a task (two common emotions that cause us to procrastinate) or are simply feeling super stressed, stay put and take some minutes to breathe deeply.

Correct breathing can very quickly lower your stress levels and put you back in control.

Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth like through a straw. Control the duration of the breathing in, breathing out and the pause in between.

Correct breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system which shifts control from your ancient brain to your prefrontal cortex.

There are plenty of resources and apps that teach you how to breathe correctly.



STRATEGY

TASK MODIFICATION

Sometimes you can modify a task to make it more appealing.

A classic example is watching your favorite TV show or listening to your favorite tunes while cleaning up.

Try to get into the habit of only allowing yourself to watch a certain show while cleaning to really strengthen the connection between the positive activity and the task you dread.

Sometimes we can also make it easier to do a dreaded task if we make ourselves really comfortable physically. Get a blanket, a snack or lie down to do a task. It can really help!



STRATEGY

BE YOUR BEST FRIEND

When you notice you struggle to get started on a task, sit down and have a conversation with yourself.

Pretend you are your best friend giving yourself advice.

Listen to what the problem is with this task, how it makes you feel and offer gentle and compassionate guidance.

Understand the concerns but also try to offer a different perspective.



STRATEGY

TASK REFRAMING

The way you write out a task (and you did write it out, didn't you?!) has a big impact on how appealing the task is to you.

Make sure the task starts with a verb (or it's unclear what "to do"), is super clear and precise. It also helps to keep each task short (5–45 min).

Play around with the exact words you use to describe the task. We naturally have more positive associations with some words than others.

Examples of task reframing:

- "Write blog post" → "Put helpful info out into the world"
- "Clean up" → "Create a cozy home"
- "Exercise" → "Flood my body with happy hormones"



STRATEGY

TASK VISUALIZATION

One of my favorite strategies! If you notice you are dreading a task and you can't get yourself to take action, get comfortable and close your eyes.

Visualize yourself doing the task in great detail. Walk through all the tiny steps.

Breathe and stay calm throughout and picture yourself confident and doing the task with ease. It will become almost hard not to do the task after you just walked through how to do it.

Visualization primes the brain for action because picturing yourself doing something uses some of the same brain regions as actually doing the task. Walking through the task while staying calm also teaches your brain the task is not dangerous.

You can start your day off visualizing your action steps while still lying in bed. Or visualize your tasks for the next day while falling asleep. Or anytime you have some time for yourself. You can never do too much visualizing.



STRATEGY

GOAL VISUALIZATION

If you are dreading to work on a task that is related to an important goal, picture yourself having reached that goal.

Truly get your body to experience what it feels like to live in that reality.

This will activate the reward center in your brain and flood it with the chemicals needed to take action.

You can actively turn on your motivational system in the brain by having active thoughts about your success!



STRATEGY

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE

Sometimes we need to recalibrate on why we DO want to do something instead of focusing on why a task feels bad or hard.

It's too easy to get hung up on the negatives about a hard or unpleasant task. But what are the benefits you reap? How will you feel once it is done? Why do you want to do this?

Really take a moment and think about all the whys and positive aspects of a task.



STRATEGY **REWARD**

For tasks that really feel more like “shoulds” than “wants” it can sometimes feel hard to think about enough positives.

In that case connect a nice reward for yourself to the task.

This strategy hinges on you being able to only reward yourself when you actually finish the task. Using an uncommon reward (something you otherwise don't treat yourself to often) can help.

You can also use tasks you are excited about as rewards.

It is important to define and write down the reward beforehand. You want to make this part very concrete or the risk of not sticking to it increases dramatically.

Cueing in an accountability partner (see below) on your intended rewards can also help to stick with it.

Bonus Tip: Taking a moment to feel proud and happy about an accomplished task adds a nice reward to any action. Making it more appealing to complete the task next time.



STRATEGY

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is a powerful motivator that helps overcome the urge to procrastinate.

All you need is someone to check in with you about your tasks. It can be a friend, family or someone you hire.

You can even set up a more permanent accountability structure, where you get a buddy and tell each other what you want to get done in a given time period (week works well) and keep each other updated regularly on what has gotten done.

As social creatures we don't want to look bad in front of others or let others down. This creates a powerful counter force to the negative emotions about a task as there are now negative immediate negative consequences to not doing the task.

Being able to tell someone you were successful also builds in extra reward to getting something done.



STRATEGY

NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

Adding a negative consequence to not doing a task can mobilize you since you will become afraid of inaction. Some people swear by services that charge you money for not doing things like stickkk.com or Beeminder.

A milder version of this is to think about what happens in your life if you consistently fail to take action on whatever you are procrastinating.

Warning: Use these strategies cautiously as they can increase the anxiety you feel around a task, which can work against you.

Remember, any negative emotion associated with a task tends to increase the response of your emotional brain and the stress from these thoughts can weaken your prefrontal cortex.

So stay aware of how they affect you if you try them.

LET'S DO THIS

TRAINING YOUR BRAIN FOR TAKING ACTION



BRAIN TRAINING

WHAT IS BRAIN TRAINING?

We already talked about how procrastination is a habit. So the more you do it the easier it becomes to do more of it.

The procrastination brain training is designed to practice the opposite habit: taking action despite not feeling like it. This is the key to breaking the procrastination habit and will strengthen your prefrontal cortex (since you have to use it over and over again).

A common mistake people make in trying to get over procrastination is setting their expectations too high. We have an idea of how productive we want to be and anything less than that is considered "not good enough".

But just as you would not expect to be able to run a marathon after years of inactivity, you shouldn't expect peak productivity if you have been in a procrastinating habit for a while.

The training program is designed to ease you into being productive and get you to practice the act of overcoming the feeling of resistance daily.



BRAIN TRAINING

SETTING UP YOUR TRAINING

- Pick a task you want to get better at doing regularly (e.g. cleaning the house, writing, programming, exercising etc.) Anything where you feel a sense of resistance to getting started.
- Alternatively, make a list of specific tasks you dread doing right now and organize them roughly from low to high dread level. Ideally each task is about 5min to maximum 1h long.
- You can also pick a large project you want to make progress on for your brain training.
- Once you have your activity, task list or project, print out one of the templates with the squares below. Each square represents a day you will train. Pick a template that appeals to you in length (number of days) and suits the actions you intend to take. Start as small as possible.



BRAIN TRAINING

SETTING UP YOUR TRAINING

- Write your list, activity or project on the template at the top.
- Clearly define what the requirement is for each square by either placing a specific task in it or defining the number of minutes you want to work on the project/activity.
- You can also label each square with the day of the week so you can keep better track on which days you took action.
- The key is to start small! You want to be able to complete an entire large square without skipping a day.
- If you can't complete a large square in one continuous go (meaning you miss a day) the training square was too hard. Set the threshold lower (reduce minutes, easier tasks) and try again.



BRAIN TRAINING

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Write down a reward for yourself for when you complete an entire square
- Use the templates with multiple small squares to increase the time you spend on an activity or project gradually. It will get easier the more you do something, so take advantage of that
- Put the template somewhere where you can see it.
- Get an accountability buddy to keep an eye on your training.
- Set a specific time for when you do the training. Generally, the earlier in the day the better.
- Write down why this is important to you or all the benefits you reap from doing this (strengthening your brain is one!)
- Write down some helpful thoughts that will help you to remember the right mindset for this activity.
- Write down some key strategies that you will use if you can't seem to take action (pick from the strategies chapter)



BRAIN TRAINING

HOW TO TRAIN

After you filled out your template and decided on a start date, complete a small square each day. Mark a successful training session with an X in the corresponding square.

If you miss a day, reflect on why you missed it. If the task was just too hard to get started on, reduce its difficulty (shorter length) or pick an easier task.

Gradually increase the difficulty of the training program. You should always feel some resistance to getting started but it shouldn't feel so hard to get started that you don't do it.

The key is to not give up or get frustrated when you can't stick to the program. Just pick an easier square to start with or make the tasks in it easier until you can complete a full square.

Ideally you always have some training program going. Feel free to switch up the activities you are training with.

Remember, procrastination is a habit and you want to keep working on it to make sure you stay in action mode.

Example

25 days of Blog writing (20 min)

X	X	X	X	

Reward: Get a 1h massage

Remember: People really benefit from what you write. Your ideas are not helpful unless you get them to the people. The ideas are important not whether or not they are written in perfect sentences!

Example

16 days of working off frogs

return package	call TCS	call Dr T.	cclean up kitchen drawer
order lights	bring cardboard to dump		

Reward: Watch new Star Wars movie

16 days of

Reward: Buy that awesome jacket

Example

9 days of cleaning for 5min

5min	5min	5min
5min	5min	5min
5min	5min	5min

9 days of cleaning for 7min

9 days of cleaning for 10min

9 days of cleaning for 15min

9 days of cleaning for 20min

9 days of cleaning for 30min

25 days of

16 days of

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IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD

HELPFUL MINDSET SHIFTS TO HELP CURB PROCRASTINATION



INTRODUCTION

WHY MINDSETS MATTER

Many beliefs you hold about yourself and the world are deeply ingrained in you and unconscious – meaning you are not aware you have these beliefs. But nonetheless these beliefs influence your actions every day.

Most of us hold at least some unhelpful beliefs that block us from being happier and acting freely.

We pick up most of these beliefs when we are children. So our mindset about many things has been with us for a really long time and without conscious reflection it just hides in our brain without us even really knowing it is there.

It is important to become aware of what these beliefs are so you can work on slowly shifting them to beliefs that help you be happier and more productive.

In this Chapter you will see some common underlying mindsets people have that can really stand in the way of success and happiness.



HOW TO **HOW TO SHIFT MINDSETS**

With any mindset shift, it will take time and consistent effort. You have to learn to think about the new mindset you are trying to adopt as much as possible and really implant those thoughts deeply into your subconscious.

There are many methods of doing this, but reflecting and engaging with the topic frequently and remembering the new thoughts in key moments is important for creating lasting change. So read about your new mindset, talk to others about it and set up reminders to get into that headspace.

Mindsets really have to be changed at a subconscious level, which will take time. [Here is a great book](#) on strategies that can truly change your mindset long term.



M I N D S E T

THE GROWTH MINDSET

The opposite of a growth mindset is a fixed mindset. And sadly a fixed mindset is incredibly common.

If you dislike doing things that are difficult or things you are not good at, it is often due to having a fixed mindset.

With a fixed mindset you believe that attributes and skills are largely due to talent and “fixed”. So if you struggle with writing, you are a bad writer. If you find learning something new difficult, it means you are stupid.

With a fixed mindset, anything you do that is not super easy for you makes you feel bad about yourself. So you tend to avoid doing challenging things.

With a growth mindset on the other hand, you know that anything is hard at first. It is all about practice. You enjoy doing challenging things because it means you are getting better at them. Doing hard things does not make you feel bad with a growth mindset, rather you enjoy it.

To develop a growth mindset I highly recommend the book [Mindset, by Carol Dweck](#)



M I N D S E T

DONE IS BETTER THAN PERFECT

Perfectionism is a very common cause of procrastination. Perfectionism causes a lot of negative emotions and reduces positive ones.

When you are only happy with an outcome when it is perfect, you are not only never truly satisfied (what is more demotivating than that?) but it also puts enormous pressure on you, which causes anxiety and fear.

Perfectionism can also make a task painful to do as you agonize over every decision in an attempt to get it just right.

You might even feel that it is better to not do the task at all if it can't be done perfectly anyway.

If you are struggling with perfectionism [here is a free workbook](#) you can download.



M I N D S E T

YOU ARE MORE THAN YOUR WORK

If your self-worth is tied too much to your work, putting out any work can feel much scarier than it has to be. Any criticism about your work feels like criticism about who you are as a person. Naturally, this creates a lot of fear around taking action.

To help counteract this, think about if you judge other people (especially close friends and family) by their work or if there are other qualities that are more important to you about these people.

How do you define what is a good and a bad person? What values are important to you in life?

Also think about why you might feel you have something to prove. Is there a particular person you need more love from? How is your relationship with yourself? Do you like yourself?

All of these questions can help you figure out why you might define yourself through your work and help you find a healthier motivation to put out good work.



MINDSET

EVERYTHING IS A CHOICE

Nobody likes to do things they have to do. By nature we are beings that want to be free and make our own choices.

A to-do list can quickly feel like a list of things you **have** to do, not things you **want** to do. And when you feel this way, trying to get things done is an uphill battle.

Have you lost touch with why you want to do the things on your to-do list? Does it feel like you just have an endless things you **MUST** do?

If so, it is time to re-connect with your inner motivation and remind yourself that everything in life is a choice.

More on this mindset change in [this blog post](#).



MINDSET

FAILURE NEEDS TO BE AVOIDED

Fear of failure is a very common reason why you might procrastinate on things that are extremely important to you, like building a business or pursuing a dream.

In your mind, trying and failing means you are not good enough (especially when your self-worth is tied to your work) so trying (taking action!) feels scary.

If you identified fear of failure as a reason why you are procrastinating on taking action, there are many strategies you can employ to work on this.

[This article](#) gives you a nice overview.

GET STRONG

HOW TO STRENGTHEN YOUR PREFRONTAL CORTEX



HEALTHY BRAIN

CAN YOU MAKE THE PREFRONTAL CORTEX STRONGER?

The prefrontal cortex is just a part of the brain, which is an organ in your body. And like any other organ, how well it functions is highly dependent on your lifestyle: what you eat, if and how you exercise, how you sleep, what toxins you are exposed to, what supplements you take and how you manage stress.

As a general rule: anything that improves your physical health will improve your brain function/prefrontal cortex and therefore your procrastination.

So long-term you definitely want to work on improving your brain health. A stronger and healthier brain will allow you to more easily overcome the resistance. Plus, a more efficient brain makes you able to work longer and more efficiently once you do get started. And the easier a task feels, the more likely you get started with it.

Remember: a healthy brain means a strong prefrontal cortex and a strong prefrontal cortex means high willpower!



HEALTHY BRAIN

REDUCE STRESS

Stress directly inhibits the prefrontal cortex and chronic stress damages your body and brain significantly.

Stress isn't always felt. And simply existing in today's world is often too stressful for our nervous system. We weren't made for traffic, computer screens and 8h+ demands on our mental capacities.

To balance this, make sure you have many strategies in place that reduce stress in your life.

A few incredibly helpful tools at your disposal for stress reduction are:

- breathing exercises
- meditation
- walks in nature
- connecting with friends & laughing
- moderate exercise
- sauna
- baths
- nutrients



HEALTHY BRAIN **MEDITATE**

Regular daily meditation has been shown to produce measurable brain changes in just a few weeks. And those are the kind of brain changes you absolutely want in order to lead not just a more productive, but an overall happier and calmer life.

With regular meditation your willpower will increase and your negative emotions will soften; a great double-whammy in our fight against procrastination.

There are plenty of free guides out there to help you get started with this. You can find guided meditations on YouTube and there are also apps to help you get into a regular meditation habit (e.g. Headspace, Calm etc.)

But don't overthink it. It's much easier than you think. Just close your eyes and focus on your breath. When you notice you start thinking about something else, just return to counting your breath. Rinse and repeat. Even 5min at a time of this throughout the day will benefit you greatly.

Just get started! Try it!



HEALTHY BRAIN **EXERCISE**

Your brain loves exercise. Exercise increases blood flow to the brain, so it can get nourished from all the nutrients in your blood. When there is not adequate blood flow or nutrition coming to the brain, the prefrontal cortex is the first brain part to suffer as it is considered the least "vital" to your survival. The brain parts that keep your heart beating and your lungs breathing will always get priority.

Regular exercise also decreases stress, which does your whole body a world of good.

Exercise increases BDNF in your brain, which is a substance that basically helps you grow new neurons. Wow!

The key to exercising regularly is to find something you enjoy. And you don't have to overdo it either. Especially when you have been inactive for a while, just try to get outside and walk for 30m. Your brain will love it!

One of my favorite exercises is a mini trampoline or playing an interactive game on a gaming console. Every movement counts! Get creative.



HEALTHY BRAIN

SLEEP

Sleep is another pillar in health and incredibly important for your brain. Did you know that during sleep your brain essentially gets flushed and cleaned (among other things)?

But sleep is not just about getting enough of it in terms of hours. You want to make sure you have high quality sleep. And good sleep starts the moment you wake up.

Look up circadian entrainment to get a list of things you can do to get better sleep (e.g. light exposure, blue light blocking, moving at the right time, darkness, going to bed early, temperature, night routine)

[Check out this article](#) that gives you a massive overview of how to optimize your sleep.



HEALTHY BRAIN

DIET

Diet is a controversial and complex topic, but everyone agrees that a whole food diet with tons of vegetables and other micronutrient rich foods is key (avoid processed food and low nutrients foods like flour and sugar etc.).

Due to soil depletion, pesticide use, long storage times and processing many of our foods have much lower nutrient content than they used to, so supplementation is now almost inevitable. When choosing supplements do your research on which form of nutrients you need to get and check where you are deficient, some artificial vitamins can do more harm than good.

The research is piling up on how the gut and all the trillions of bacteria that live there are crucial for a healthy body. Especially brain health is intrinsically tied to your gut. Did you know that you have so many neurons in your gut that it can be thought of as a second brain? Read up on the latest in microbiome research and gut health.

Adequate hydration is another important brain requirement. Even mild dehydration can severely limit your brain's ability to function. And many people are now chronically dehydrated.

S U M M A R Y

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Procrastination is an emotion regulation problem
- Figure out what you procrastinate on and why (raise awareness)
- Learn to minimize and tolerate negative emotions through mindset shifts, methods and practice
- A procrastination supporting productivity system can reduce procrastination
- Prevent negative spirals, focus on creating positive spirals
- Use a custom mix of procrastination tools and strategies to take action on tasks
- A training program is key to fixing the problem long-term
- Mindset shifts help to minimize negative emotions
- A strong brain can overcome procrastination more easily, learn how to take care of your brain

WANT MORE?
JOIN OUR BOOTCAMP

We are launching a virtual procrastination bootcamp in 2020. A guided online course with integrated exercises and support.

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