

Undone: How to Change Our Procrastination Patterns

Procrastination starts from an avoidance of something from fear, then becomes a pattern that hardens into a habit.

We reinforce this procrastination habit through years of practice, and it hurts us in so many ways in our lives — not only with work tasks, but much more.

The procrastination habit affects:

- Dealing with our finances head-on
- Health habits (putting off exercise, for example)
- Dealing with our health problems (putting it off makes it much worse)
- Relationships (putting off difficult conversations)
- Creating, art, meaningful work
- Decluttering and simplifying
- Being on time (and being late can cause us stress)
- Learning new things

And much more. Those are just some of the most visible examples, but we procrastinate all day long, by checking our phones, favorite websites, email, messages, news, watching TV, playing games, and ... well, you all know your favorite procrastination techniques.

So the question becomes, how do we stop hurting ourselves, after all these years? How do we start to unravel our hardened procrastination habits and create more helpful patterns?

The answer is to start thinking of these hardened patterns as grooves.

The Grooves of Our Habits

When you first procrastinated, you didn't have a hardened pattern. You had a choice. You could do your homework (or pick up your toys, perhaps), or you could put that off until later and do something else that's perhaps more fun.

You felt fear or resistance with one task, which made the other option more appealing. You chose the easy route, and that felt good in the moment. There was immediate reward. There was difficulty later, but that was something future you had to deal with.

All other choices like this were rewarded with immediate gratification. So by repeating this choice over and over, you start to wear a groove into the ground. After awhile, the reward isn't even needed ... the groove becomes so much easier to follow, and getting out of the groove is so much harder. The longer we keep sticking with the groove, the harder it is to

change.

Habits are grooves. You stick to the old ones, until you're willing to put in the effort to get out of the grooves and make new choices.

How do you get out of the groove you've made? Conscious effort.

How to Change Your Patterns, or Get Your Groove On

The steps of breaking out of a groove are simple, but they require concentrated effort:

1. **Decide that you're tired of the old groove.** The old groove isn't serving you. It's hurting you. When you decide you're tired of hurting yourself with this particular patterns, you're ready to change. Assess whether you're ready right now.
2. **Commit to conscious change.** When you're ready to stop hurting yourself with the old pattern, make a commitment to practice and to be very conscious in changing your groove. Making the commitment to someone else, or a small group of friends or family, is a powerful way to commit.
3. **Set aside time for deliberate practice.** You're not going to change your groove haphazardly. You have to practice consciously and with deliberate effort. Set aside a small practice period each day — just 5 minutes to start with. Don't put off the task of blocking off your practice period — remember, you're deliberately practicing a new pattern! I recommend 5-10 minutes every day of the week, first thing in the morning before you check email or your phone or computer. Have a reminder where you will see it first thing in the morning.
4. **Set an intention for your practice.** Before you start, tap into your reason by remembering why you're practicing. In what ways is this hurting you in your life? Is it hurting your career, health, happiness, relationships, finances, meaningful work, your loved ones? Set an intention to practice in order to make these things better.
5. **Set yourself a task.** Pick something you've been putting off (but perhaps not your hardest or most uncomfortable tasks to start with). Commit to doing that task for just 5 minutes.
6. **Let yourself do nothing else, and watch your patterns.** Sit there and do nothing but that task, or do nothing at all. Notice when you have the urge to switch to something else, to get up and get away. Those are your old patterns showing themselves, which in itself is hugely valuable. But just observe the urges, without acting on them but also without judgment. Their just urges, just feelings that arise, not anything to worry about. Just watch, don't act, just sit and face the urges. Then return to the task. Over and over, until this is your new groove.

It's possible to create new grooves, new patterns, that serve you better. I've done it dozens of times in my life, perhaps more than a hundred in the last decade. I'm no stronger than

anyone else, and so if I can do it, you can too.

The Undone Course

I'm launching a new video course today in my Sea Change Program called **Undone: Reprogramming the Procrastination Habit**.

I invite you to join us in this 4-week course, by joining Sea Change today.

Sea Change is my monthly membership program for changing habits, learning mindfulness and changing your life. Each month, we focus on something different, and this month it's procrastination.

What you'll get with this course:

1. Two video lessons per week
2. Exercises to work with your procrastination patterns mindfully
3. A challenge to do these exercises a short time six days a week for the whole month
4. A weekly check-in for the challenge so you stay accountable
5. A live video webinar (for Gold members) and the ability to submit questions for me to answer

I encourage you to join me and have your efforts to change your old patterns be supported by me and more than a thousand other Sea Change members.

Join Sea Change today and start the course.