

Don't Get Stuck Waiting

The worst thing in the world is to be stuck waiting on something, with nothing you can do to speed it up and no action to take until it's done.

If you're creating a business, work of art, or project of any kind and you're waiting on another person before you can take the next step, I feel you. I've been there and I hate it.

The first thing I like to do in such situations is to explore every possibility of what I *can* do. It's amazing how often there are things you can do to move the project forward even when you think you're stuck waiting. Probe every possibility, and take every action you can take, no matter how small.

Next, I like to explore any possible ways I can speed up the other party. Can I offer to help? Can I do some of it for them? Can I give them a deadline? Can I light a fire under them? Can I break the arrangement and find another, faster partner?

Sometimes there's nothing left to do, and no way to speed up the other person. Here, the feeling is so frustrating – like being stuck in traffic with no way to impact the drive time – it's easy to succumb to cathartic rage. But if you want to prevent this kind of situation in the future, now is a great time to reflect and learn.

Step back and evaluate the task you're working on, and the role the other party plays. How might things have been structured or framed so that you didn't get stuck waiting? Work through as many permutations as you can. What would need to be different in your situation to not be stuck like this? Make a plan to get there.

Every time I've been held up, powerless to make progress until I hear back from someone, I've resolved to never be in that position again. Each time, I gain understanding of how to avoid it in that specific situation, and reduce it more generally. Now when I embark on any endeavor, I make it a top priority to arrange the project in such a way that anyone I'm working with will be a collaborator, not a permission slip or bottleneck.

"I'm going to do this regardless, but it will be better if you help" is vastly superior to, "I really want to do this but I can't do anything unless you will do part of it".