

Four Antidotes to Procrastination

Lately I've been procrastinating a bit more than normal, and of course it doesn't feel great.

The truth is, though, that there are a number of good reasons for my procrastination:

1. I've had some serious jetlag and sleep issues, which means my mind is tired and just needs some rest. So I am trying to be patient and take care of myself.
2. I've had a lot on my plate, and it's been overwhelming. Not just work stuff (though there's lots of that), but family stuff too. So instead of holding myself to impossible standards, I have to be compassionate and allow myself to create some space, to simplify, to find a path that works for me.
3. I'm pushing myself into lots of uncertain territory this year. That brings up fears. I've been running from those fears at times, through procrastination. This is natural, and I shouldn't beat myself up for it. Instead, I can be compassionate, and mindful, and find a path forward.

So if it's not such a bad thing, my procrastination, and I shouldn't beat myself up about it ... problem solved, right? Or actually there's no problem at all?

Well, yes ... there's actually no problem. This isn't anything to feel bad about. However, I do believe that we should find an antidote (or two) to our procrastination, because it usually means we're not doing the meaningful work we want to do in the world. It's worth figuring out.

So in this article, I want to offer a few antidotes to procrastination, so that we can all find a path to doing the meaningful work we want to do, a path to offering our gift fully to the world.

Antidote 1: Self-Care

The first thing to ask yourself, if you're procrastinating, is: "Am I tired? Do I need to take care of myself?"

Often my procrastinating is simply because I haven't been getting good rest, or I've been doing so much that I'm tiring myself out. Maybe I went for a hard run in the morning and I'm not feeling energetic in the evening. Maybe I've been working hard on a project for a week without a mental break.

When this is the case, the answer is to get some rest. Take a nap. Sleep in. Disconnect, and read a paper book. Go for a slow walk, not for exercise but to get a mental breather. Meditate. Do some yoga.

The main ideas are to sleep, disconnect, get away from everything, and perhaps meditate. Reflect, contemplate, find stillness and quietude.

Once you're refreshed (and it might just mean a 20-minute nap and a short meditation), you can find mindful focus again.

Antidote 2: Make a (Small) Commitment

What helped me during one point of my procrastination was to make a commitment to a friend that I would do a bunch of work at a specific time. And if I didn't do that work, I would have to suffer a consequence that we both agreed to.

Needless to say, I stuck to my commitment. I got the work done, no matter what it took.

Tomorrow I'm going to make a commitment to my wife to record a series of videos over two days. If I don't ... no coffee for a week!

When you make a sacred commitment to someone you respect, you'll elevate the act from something you want to shrink from, to a vow that you want to uphold. Then doing the work will be something you *want* to do!

Protip: Make the action you commit to doing be fairly small. That will make it easier to get started, and you'll be able to launch into your commitment without too much trouble.

Antidote 3: Create the Space

A big part of the problem with constant procrastination is that we are in an environment that is conducive to distraction, to doing small tasks (like checking messages, answering emails, seeing how many likes you got on Facebook, etc.).

You might set yourself to doing the work, but then decide to just check one thing real quick. And that leads to checking another. And before you know it, a whole day has gone by. It's hard to focus when you're in an environment like this.

So the smallest first step you need to do is create the space. Turn off wifi, set up an Internet blocker, unplug your router, or get somewhere where there is no Internet. With an environment like this, you will be able to focus much better.

This is why my best writing is often done on planes or trains. Or when I use a distraction-free writing tool, or an Internet blocker. There isn't anything else to do but the work I've committed to doing.

For other people, that might mean finding a space where you'll do nothing but the work you're going to do — a practice space for martial arts or music, for example, or a reading

space with no electronic devices, or a painting studio in your garage.

Create the space, clear everything away, then get to it.

Antidote 4: Find the Joy in It

When we think of the work as something huge and difficult, stressful and overwhelming, or full of fear ... it's hard *not* to procrastinate.

So a switch in mindset would be hugely beneficial. If you love doing it, you won't procrastinate!

The trick is to find the joy in the activity. Don't just do it like it's a chore to be gotten over with, or some ordeal you need to make it through. Instead, see it as a treasured activity that you *get* to do. Something that is a privilege to do, because not everyone gets to do this kind of work.

What an amazing thing it is to be alive, doing this activity right now, in the miracle of existence and of this moment! What a breathtaking thing, if only we don't take it for granted, and fully appreciate the fleeting joyful beauty of this moment.

So in each moment, appreciate the profound power of what you're doing, be fully immersed in it, fully mindful of the sensations of the experience and see if there isn't the thrill of joy to be found in every motion, every breath.

Your brain will start to program itself to dive into this joyful activity, and you will be awake to the world.