

Procrastination Action Plan

Action Planning

It can be helpful for us to draw up a clear plan of action for what it is we need to do when the urge to procrastinate arises. Below are the 6 steps to get on top of your procrastination, any time you feel it is getting the better of you.

Step 1. Being Aware & Non-Blaming

The first step is to stop and recognise your urge to procrastinate. However, when you do recognise that you are procrastinating or you are having the urge to procrastinate, do so in a non-judgemental and non-blaming way. Don't beat yourself up for it, but instead recognise that procrastination has arrived and that you are going to make a choice to do things differently.

Step 2. Adjust Unhelpful Rules & Assumptions

If you can recognise the unhelpful rule or assumption of yours that is being activated by your task or goal, you can make attempts to adjust this. You can do this by challenging the rule or assumption, questioning where it came from?, how is it unreasonable/unrealistic/unfair/unhelpful?, and identifying its negative consequences? Then you can think of a new more helpful rule or assumption, and what you would need to do to put it into practice in this situation.

Step 3. Practice Tolerating Discomfort

If you can recognise the discomfort that is arising within you about doing the task or goal, you can practice tolerating it mindfully by just being aware and observing or watching the discomfort without judgement, making space for it and hence letting it go when its ready. You could imagine riding the wave of your discomfort or delaying procrastination to give yourself time to practice sitting with the discomfort.

Step 4. Dismiss Procrastination Excuses & Encourage

Look for the excuses you are making to justify your procrastination. Notice your old unhelpful conclusions, such as not needing to do the task now because of some circumstance. Dispute if this conclusion really is true, by asking what is the evidence or reasons?, am I really going to be better off?, is it really true I can't get started?, what will the consequences be? Also, is there a way to test if your conclusion is true, rather than assuming it is? And finally settle on a conclusion that is

more helpful to you, something more along the line that you can make some small start now! Drop any self-criticisms and instead talk to yourself as if you were motivating and encouraging a friend.

Step 5. Carry Out Practical Strategies

Decide on the practical strategies most relevant to the task or goal at hand and apply these practical strategies. Remember, to gain clarity as to exactly what needs to be done, write a list of tasks and goals, then prioritise these, then grade each, and then accurately estimate how much time each step of each task or goal will take. There are numerous ways you can approach any given step of a task, such as worst-first, using momentum, just 5-minutes, set time limits, prime time, prime place, remember-then-do, reminders, visualise, focus, and plan rewards. To know when you have the time to attempt a step of the task, you can use a schedule or an unschedule.

Step 6. Reflect & Revise Plan

Now step back and reflect on how you are doing. Examine how things are going. Appreciate what is working well and the positive consequences of doing rather than procrastinating. Also recognise what areas may need some improvement. If something does need to be revised, revisit steps 1-5, and try again. Please know that of your action plan, it is steps 4 & 5 that are most important to focus on, in order to see some change in your procrastination habit.

Keeping Going

Now, at the end of the day the important thing is to keep going! Expect that changing your procrastination habit will take time, practice, persistence and patience. Expect that you will have good days and bad. Expect you will have days you feel like a 'doer', and days you feel like you have slipped back into 'procrastinationville'. The old saying of "two steps forward, one step back" is very true. If you expect setbacks when you sign up for the journey of changing your procrastination, then when you face a bump in the road, you will be less likely to blame yourself and give up. As such, you will be better able to use the 6 steps of the action plan just covered, to help you get over that bump and keep moving full steam ahead!



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