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Work

Life

Ending Procrastination

NAVIGATOR

Perseverance is about as important to achievement as gasoline is to driving a car. Sure, there will be times when you feel like you're spinning your wheels, but you'll always get out of the rut with genuine perseverance. Without it, you won't even be able to start your engine.

The opposite of perseverance is procrastination. Perseverance means you never quit. Procrastination usually means you never get started, although the inability to finish something is also a form of procrastination.

Ask people why they procrastinate, and you'll often hear something like this: "I'm a perfectionist. Everything has to be just right before I can get down to work. No distractions, not too much noise, no telephone calls interrupting me, and of course I have to be feeling well physically, too. I can't work when I have a headache. "The other end of procrastination—being unable to finish—also has a perfectionist explanation: "I'm just never satisfied. I'm my own harshest critic. If all the i's aren't dotted and all the t's aren't crossed, I just can't consider that I'm done. That's just the way I am, and I'll probably never change."

Do you see what's going on here? A fault is being turned into a virtue. The perfectionist is saying that his standards are just too high for this world. This fault-into-virtue syndrome is a common defense when people are called upon to discuss their weaknesses, but, in the

end, it's just a very pious kind of excuse making. It certainly doesn't have anything to do with what's really behind procrastination.

Remember, the basis of procrastination could be fear of failure. That's what perfectionism really is, once you take a hard look at it. What's the difference whether you're afraid of being less than perfect or afraid of anything else? You're still paralyzed by fear. What's the difference whether you never start or never finish? You're still stuck. You're still going nowhere. You're still overwhelmed by whatever task is before you. You're still allowing yourself to be dominated by a negative vision of the future in which you see yourself being criticized, laughed at, punished, or ridden out of town on a rail. Of course, this negative vision of the future is really a mechanism that allows you to do nothing. It's a very convenient mental tool.

I'm going to tell you how to overcome procrastination. I'm going to show you how to turn procrastination into perseverance, and, if you do what I suggest, the process will be virtually painless. It involves using two very powerful principles that foster productivity and perseverance instead of passivity and procrastination.

The first principle is: BREAK IT DOWN.

No matter what you're trying to accomplish, whether it's writing a book, climbing a mountain, or painting a house, the key to

achievement is your ability to break down the task into manageable pieces and knock them off one at a time. Focus on accomplishing what's right in front of you at this moment. Ignore what's off in the distance someplace. Substitute real-time positive thinking for negative future visualization. That's the first all-important technique for bringing an end to procrastination.

Suppose I were to ask you if you could write a 400-page novel. If you're like most people, that would sound like an impossible task. But suppose I ask you a different question. Suppose I ask if you can write a page and a quarter a day for one year. Do you think you could do it? Now the task is starting to seem more manageable. We're breaking down the 400-page book into bite-size pieces. Even so, I suspect many people would still find the prospect intimidating. Do you know why? Writing a page and a quarter may not seem so bad, but you're being asked to look ahead one whole year. When people start to look that far ahead, many of them automatically go into a negative mode. So let me formulate the idea of writing a book in yet another way. Let me break it down even more.

Suppose I were to ask you if you can fill up a page and a quarter with words—not for a year, not for a month, not even for a week, but just today? Don't look any further ahead than that.

I believe most people would confidently declare that they could accomplish that. Of course, these would be the same people who feel totally incapable of writing a whole book.

If I said the same thing to those people tomorrow—if I told them, I don't want you to look back, and I don't want you to look ahead, I just want you to fill up a page and a quarter this very day—do you think they could do it?

One day at a time. We've all heard that phrase. That's what we're doing here. We're breaking down the time required for a major task into one-day segments, and we're breaking down the work involved in writing a 400-page book into page-and-a-quarter increments.

Keep this up for one year, and you'll write the book. Discipline yourself to look neither forward nor backward, and you can accomplish things you never thought you could possibly do. And it all begins with those three words: break it down.



My second technique for defeating procrastination is also only three words long. The three words are: WRITE IT DOWN.

We know how important writing is to goal setting. The writing you'll do for beating procrastination is very similar. Instead of focusing on the future, however, you're now going to be writing about the present just as you experience it every day. Instead of describing the things you want to do or the places you want to go, you're going to describe what you actually do with your time, and you're going to keep a written record of the places you actually go.

In other words, you're going to keep a diary of your activities. And you're going to be amazed by the distractions, detours, and downright wastes of time you engage in during the course of a day. All of these get in the way of achieving your goals. For many people, it's almost like they planned it that way, and maybe at some unconscious level they did. The great thing about keeping a time diary is that it brings all this out in the open. It forces you to see what you're actually doing . . . and what you're not doing.

The time diary doesn't have to be anything elaborate. Just buy a little spiral notebook that you can easily carry in your pocket. When you go to lunch, when you drive across town, when you go to the dry cleaners, when you spend some time shooting the breeze at the copying machine, make a quick note of the time you began the activity and the time it ends. Try to make this notation as soon as possible; if it's inconvenient to do it immediately, you can do it later. But you should make an entry in your time diary at least once every 30 minutes, and you should keep this up for at least a week.

Break it down. Write it down. These two techniques are very straightforward. But don't let that fool you: these are powerful and effective productivity techniques. This is how you put an end to procrastination. This is how you get yourself started.

(Source: Jim Rohn at www.jimrohn.com)

WEB SITE PICKS

<http://www.yugop.com/ver3/stuff/03/fla.html>

This is one of those obscure things that you run across on the Web every once in a while. No real purpose, but it captures your interest. So by now you are asking what it is. Simply, it's a clock. It tells time to the second. But this is no ordinary clock. This one is represented by hand-written numbers erased each time the numbers change.

"How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these."—George Washington Carver

INSPIRATION

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Five Great Lessons

1. Most Important Lesson

During my second month of college, our professor gave us a pop quiz. I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the questions, until I read the last one: "What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?"

Surely, this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired, and in her 50s, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Just before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade. "Absolutely," said the professor. "In your careers, you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say 'hello'."

I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy.

2. Second Important Lesson—Pickup in the Rain

One night, at 11:30 p.m., an older African American woman was standing on the side of an Alabama highway trying to endure a lashing rainstorm. Her car had broken down, and she desperately needed a ride. Soaking

wet, she decided to flag down the next car. A young White man stopped to help her, generally unheard of in those conflict-filled 1960s. The man took her to safety, helped her get assistance, and put her into a taxicab. She seemed to be in a big hurry, but wrote down his address and thanked him. Seven days went by and a knock came on the man's door. To his surprise, a giant console color TV was delivered to his home. A special note was attached. It read: "Thank you so much for assisting me on the highway the other night. The rain drenched not only my clothes, but also my spirits. Then you came along. Because of you, I was able to make it to my dying husband's bedside just before he passed away. God bless you for helping me and unselfishly serving others." Sincerely, Mrs. Nat King Cole.

3. Third Important Lesson—Always Remember Those Who Serve

In the days when an ice cream sundae cost much less, a 10-year-old boy entered a hotel coffee shop and sat at a table. A waitress put a glass of water in front of him. "How much is an ice cream sundae?" he asked. "Fifty cents," replied the waitress. The little boy pulled his hand out of his pocket and studied the coins in it. "Well, how much is a plain dish of ice cream?" he inquired. By now, more people were waiting for a table, and the waitress was growing impatient. "Thirty-five cents," she brusquely replied. The little boy again counted his coins. "I'll have the plain ice cream," he said. The waitress brought the ice cream, put the bill on the table, and walked away. The boy finished the ice cream, paid the cashier, and left. When the waitress came back, she began to cry as she wiped down the table. There, placed neatly beside the empty dish, were two nickels and five pennies. You see, he couldn't have the sundae, because he had to have enough left to leave her a tip.

4. Fourth Important Lesson—The Obstacle in Our Path

In ancient times, a king had a boulder placed on a roadway. Then he hid himself and watched to see if anyone would remove the huge rock. Some of the king's wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it. Many loudly blamed the king for not keeping the roads clear, but none did anything about getting the stone out of the way.

Then a peasant came along carrying a load of vegetables. Upon approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to move the stone to the side of the road. After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded.

After the peasant picked up his load of vegetables, he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been. The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the

king indicating that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway. The peasant learned what many of us never understand. Every obstacle presents an opportunity to improve our condition.

5. Fifth Important Lesson—Giving When It Counts

Many years ago, when I worked as a volunteer at a hospital, I got to know a little girl named Liz who was suffering from a rare and serious disease. Her only chance of recovery appeared to be a blood transfusion from her five-year-old brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease and had developed the antibodies needed to combat the illness. The doctor explained the situation to her little brother and asked the little boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister. I saw him hesitate for only a moment before taking a deep breath and saying, "Yes, I'll do it if it will save her." As the transfusion progressed, he lay in bed next to his sister and smiled, as we all did, seeing the color returning to her cheeks. Then his face grew pale and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, "Will I start to die right away?" Being young, the little boy had misunderstood the doctor; he thought he was going to have to give his sister all of his blood in order to save her.

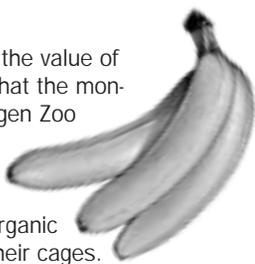
You see, after all, understanding and attitude are everything.

Author Unknown

HEALTHY FOOD TIP

Going Bananas

For those who doubt the value of organic foods, note that the monkeys at the Copenhagen Zoo instinctively reject non-organic foods when organic bananas and other organic fruits are placed in their cages.



The chimpanzees are able to tell the difference between the organic and the regular fruit, and, their choices are not at all random. In fact, they peel the traditional bananas before eating them, but not the organic bananas.

Pesticide safety is an issue among banana workers, and, despite control measures, reduction in systemic illness has yet to be achieved. Cultivation methods (greenhouse or outdoors) and farming style (conventional or organic) influence mineral concentrations in bananas so that their source can actually be determined by the mineral content.

One banana has 16 percent of the fiber, 15 percent of the vitamin C, and 11 percent of the potassium required every day for good health. Since potassium depletion is a risk

factor for stroke, an organic banana a day may keep your stroke away! A large banana contains about 602 mg of potassium.

Two or three bananas a day were found to be beneficial in treating children with celiac disease (an intolerance to grains that contain gluten, such as wheat, rye, oats, and barley).

Applying the inside of a banana skin to a mild frostbitten area can bring immediate relief.

Bananas ripen quickly. To accelerate ripening, place in a paper or plastic bag and add an apple.

A gray tint and dull appearance indicate that bananas have been refrigerated. Once ripe, however, bananas can be refrigerated.

(Sources: 2003 by Agence France-Presse; *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health* 2001; 7(2): 90-7; *Journal of Agricultural Food Chemistry* 2002; 50(21): 6130-5. Excerpted by Betty Kamen, Ph.D., and Michael Rosenbaum, M.D. <http://www.bettykamen.com>)

Openness results from an increased awareness that only the present counts. The truly open person is not frightened by what might be. He or she focuses attention on NOW, realizing that the future can only be altered by what is achieved in the present.—Shale Paul in *The Warrior Within*

HUMOR

Flight Log

Never let it be said that ground crews and engineers lack a sense of humor. Here are some actual logged maintenance complaints by QANTAS pilots and the corrective action recorded by mechanics. By the way, Qantas is the only major airline that has never had an accident.

(P stands for the problem the pilots entered in the log, and S stands for the corrective action taken by the mechanics.)

P: Left inside main tire almost needs replacement.
S: Almost replaced left inside main tire.

P: Test flight OK, except autoland very rough.
S: Autoland not installed on this aircraft.

P: Something loose in cockpit.
S: Something tightened in cockpit.

P: Dead bugs on windshield.
S: Live bugs on back order.

P: Autopilot in altitude-hold mode produces a 200-fpm descent.
S: Cannot reproduce problem on ground.

P: Evidence of leak on right main landing gear.
S: Evidence removed.

P: DME volume unbelievably loud.
S: DME volume set to more believable level.

P: Friction locks cause throttle levers to stick.
S: That's what they're there for!

P: IFF inoperative.
S: IFF always inoperative in OFF mode.

P: Suspected crack in windscreen.
S: Suspect you're right.

P: Number 3 engine missing. (Note: this was for a piston-engined airplane; the pilot meant the engine was not running smoothly.)
S: Engine found on right wing after brief search.

P: Aircraft handles funny.
S: Aircraft warned to straighten up, fly right, and be serious.

P: Radar hums.
S: Reprogrammed radar with words.

P: Mouse in cockpit.
S: Cat installed.

"Every moment that you spend upset, in despair, in anguish, angry or hurt because of the behavior of anybody else in your life is a moment in which you have given up control of your life."—Dr. Wayne Dyer

WORDS OF WISDOM

Read Each One Carefully and Think About It a Second or Two

1. I love you not because of who you are, but because of who I am when I am with you.

2. No man or woman is worth your tears, and the one who is, won't make you cry.

3. Just because someone doesn't love you the way you want them to, doesn't mean they don't love you with all they have.

4. A true friend is someone who reaches for your hand and touches your heart.

5. The worst way to miss someone is to be sitting right beside them knowing you can't have them.

6. Never frown, even when you are sad, because you never know who is falling in love with your smile.

7. To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world.

8. Don't waste your time on a man/woman who isn't willing to waste their time on you.

9. Maybe God wants us to meet a few wrong people before meeting the right one, so that when we finally meet the person, we will know how to be grateful.

10. Don't cry because it is over, smile because it happened.

11. There are always going to be people who hurt you, so what you have to do is keep on trusting and just be more careful about whom you trust next time around.

12. Make yourself a better person and know who you are before you try and know someone else and expect them to know you.

13. Don't try so hard, the best things come when you least expect them to.

REMEMBER: WHATEVER HAPPENS, HAPPENS FOR A REASON.

HEALTH

Duct Tape and Warts

Duct tape is significantly more effective in treating common warts than any other method.

Here's the process:

1. Cover the wart with duct tape and leave in place for six days.
2. Remove tape after six days and soak the area in water.
3. Debride the wart with an emery board or pumice stone.
4. Twelve hours later, recover the wart with duct tape, and repeat the process.

The cycle may have to be repeated a few times, but usually works within two months; although most warts will respond to this treatment within the first month.

The use of duct tape appears to be the most promising, safest, and most nonthreatening treatment modality for children.

(Source: Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine 2002; 156: 971-977. Excerpted by Betty Kamen, Ph.D., and Michael Rosenbaum, M.D. <http://www.bettykamen.com>)

"Do more than exist; live. Do more than touch; feel. Do more than look; observe. Do more than read; absorb. Do more than hear; listen. Do more than listen; understand. Do more than think; ponder. Do more than talk; say something."—John H. Rhoades

TECH TIP

Send a note and use some of these IM (Instant Messages) and e-mail abbreviations.

1. AFK—Away from keyboard
2. B—I'm back
3. BBFN—Bye bye for now
4. BBL—I'll be back later
5. BFN—Bye for now
6. BG—Big grin
7. BO—Brain overload

8. BRB—I'll be right back

9. CMIW—Correct me if I'm wrong

10. CU—See you

11. CUL8R—See you later

12. EG—Evil grin

13. FIIOOH—Forget it. I'm out of here

14. FITB—Fill in the blank

15. G—Grin

16. G2G—I've got to go

17. IMHO—In my humble opinion

18. IMO—In my opinion

19. JK—Just kidding

20. L8R—Later

21. LOL—I'm laughing out loud

22. NE1—Anyone

23. OMG—Oh my gosh

24. ROFL—Rolling on the floor laughing

25. TIC—Tongue in cheek

26. TTYL—I'll talk to you later

27. WB—Welcome back

28. TTFN—Ta ta for now

THOUGHT DU JOUR

Feathers in the Wind

There is a 19th century folktale about a man who went about town slandering the town's wise man. One day, he went to the wise man's home and asked for forgiveness. The wise man, realizing that this man had not internalized the gravity of his transgressions, told him that he would forgive him on one condition: that he go home, take a feather pillow from his house, cut it up, and scatter the feathers to the wind. After he had done so, he should then return to the wise man's house.

Though puzzled by this strange request, the man was happy to be let off with so easy a penance. He quickly cut up the pillow, scattered the feathers, and returned to the house.

"Am I now forgiven?" he asked.

"Just one more thing," the wise man said. "Go now and gather up all the feathers."

"But that's impossible. The wind has already scattered them."

"Precisely," he answered. "And though you may truly wish to correct the evil you have done, it is as impossible to repair the damage done by your words as it is to recover the feathers. Your words are out there in the marketplace, spreading hate, even as we speak."

How interesting it is that we, as human beings, so quick to believe the bad that others say about someone; so accepting of the "news" contained in print and television tabloids, and so ready to assume the worst regarding another's actions, actually allow ourselves to believe that the evil we spread about someone won't really matter. Incredible that we can't seem to immedi-

ately and resolutely accept the fact that the gossip we speak can—and often does—do significant damage to that person.

Bob's friend, Paul Myers, says, "Gossip is like a fired bullet. Once you hear the sound, you can't take it back." That is what the man in the above story found out in a very disappointing, shameful moment of self-discovery.

And it isn't just what we say about someone to others, but what we say to that person directly as well. We've all been told that "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never harm me." We also know that is totally untrue. While a body will typically recover from a physical injury, the harm caused by direct insults can sometimes last a lifetime, and tear the self-esteem right out of a person.

On the other hand, kind, encouraging words can build a person's self-esteem, help him or her to grow, and give them the impetus they need to do great, significant things with their lives. The choice regarding how we speak about or to someone is ours. It's called "free will."

(Source: From the book, *Gossip: Ten Pathways to Eliminate It From Your Life and Transform Your Soul*, by Lori Palatnik with Bob Burg. <http://www.EndGossip.com>)

FINANCES

IRAs for Homemakers

Generally, IRA contributions can be made only if you have earned income. However, a non-working spouse can make an IRA contribution if the other spouse works. Such a spouse is eligible to contribute up to \$3,000 to an IRA for 2003 (and for 2002, too, up to April 15, 2003). An extra \$500 can be contributed by people age 50 or older.

What's more, nonworking spouse's contribution may be deductible, even if the working spouse is covered by an employer's retirement plan. To get a full IRA deduction in this circumstance, the couple must have a joint adjusted gross income (AGI) of under \$150,000. Partial deductions are permitted, up to \$160,000 in AGI.

(Source: *Retirement & Financial Planning Report*, published by *FEDweek*.)

Questions/Comments to:

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An online version of this newsletter may be found at <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/codec/cc/navig-4.pdf>

