

CONVERTING AVOIDANCE TO ACTION FOR YOUR BENEFIT

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Along with many people, you may tend to postpone things that:

- make you feel uncomfortable or intimidated
- you're not confident about doing
- seem overwhelming or unwieldy
- take you to unknown or scary places
- are new to you
- appear boring or uninteresting

Most of these reactions relate to avoiding what seems unpredictable, challenging or demanding. Yet, doing such activities can stretch and stimulate; the experience leads to a stronger sense of confidence and eventual satisfaction. They are often means to important ends.

Describe the most significant matter you are avoiding:

To encourage yourself, summarize briefly below several of the benefits that could result from what you are postponing:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Consider how what you are postponing connects to a few of your top passions, interests or goals. Mention them below:

1. _____
2. _____

If they connect only to your professional life, what two top passions, interests or goals relate to your personal life?

1. _____

2. _____

Jot down below any common themes in the passions, interests or goals you've chosen that relate to both personal and professional choices:

If no common themes come to mind immediately, here are examples that may relate to your situation:

- improving relationships with people who are important to you or who can help you
- organizing or bringing to fruition a project, program or plan
- dealing with conflict
- obtaining resources
- learning how to do something that will help you progress and applying it

At this point, you may find it useful to specify what you are losing or missing by continuing to avoid the significant matter you defined earlier. Write down up to three results you anticipate if you don't act.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

But let's be realistic. There may be risks in proceeding, especially when what you're avoiding reflects something you really want. They could include:

- loss of face
- conflict
- mistakes, possibly noted by others
- exposure of inadequacy
- disappointment
- a sense of unworthiness
- anxiety or fear related to success and failure

- change in life style
- change in relationships
- change in resources
- change in identity
- change in comfort level
- change in power or influence

Though any are possible, consider what you can do to minimize the most significant risk related to what you are postponing. Your responses to what's useful to you among the following may ease your progress:

- What manageable step can you take that has the smallest risk?
- Who can help you? What will you offer in return?
- What specific skills and information that you don't have are necessary to proceed effectively? How would you develop them?
- What preliminary experiences or practice would be helpful?
- Specify the worst thing that could happen if you act. How can you deal with it by preparing yourself and limiting its impact?
- Imagine what the fear, challenge or change you anticipate will be like to experience. How will you work through it?

If you decide to take action, start with a small, low-risk step. Briefly describe below the first one and the specific date and time within the next few days you will devote to follow up:

Here are additional ways to ease yourself forward.

- Build on or select from relevant approaches of others.
- Adapt your own strengths to a particular situation
- Create and use opportunities available in the moment or immediately accessible.
- Specify how you will reward yourself for any progress.

In addition to these ideas, add your own below:

Just in case you find you are wasting your precious time or fooling yourself, "just say no" if you begin to:

- Sabotage your progress with half-baked efforts or distracting activities.
- Repeat predictable, overdone choices that haven't worked for you previously.

- Wallow in negative fantasies that thwart action and hope.
- Believe that a large issue or problem must be solved or handled before you take modest steps to deal with what you are postponing.

Whatever aspects of this guidance and your own good sense and skills you decide to use, remember to commit to manageable action. Maybe start with 15-30 minutes daily for a few days until you create a rhythm that promotes momentum. Then increase the amount of time you give to the matter. Regularity helps.

As William Duggan suggests in *Strategic Intuition*, basing all action on meeting dramatic, fixed goals is not always effective. Instead, see what happens your you're your choices are based on authentic aims and consistent application. Keep in mind how what you do will reap benefits that serve your interests and passions.

Note: Explore *Procrastination* by Jane Burka and Leonora Yuen for additional ideas and guidance.