

Converting Avoidance to Action for Your Benefit

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

- make you feel uncomfortable or intimidated
- you're not confident about doing well
- 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, leading to a stronger sense of confidence and eventual satisfaction. They are often means to important ends.

Describe briefly the most significant action you are avoiding.

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

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Consider how what you are postponing could support any of your two top passions, interests, or goals. Mention two examples below:

1. _____
2. _____

If the examples above connect only to your professional life, mention below how what you're postponing could support any of these two top passions, interests, or goals that relate to your personal life.

1. _____

2. _____

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

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, process, or plan
- dealing effectively with conflict
- obtaining resources
- learning how to do something that will help you progress and applying it effectively

At this point, you may find it useful to specify what you are losing or missing by continuing to avoid the significant activity you mentioned at the top of the first page. Write down up to three losses you could imagine if you don't act now or soon.

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
- unresolvable conflict

- mistakes, possibly noted by others
- exposure of inadequacy
- disappointment
- a sense of unworthiness
- anxiety or fear related to success or failure
- change in life style
- change in relationships
- change in resources
- change in identity
- change in comfort level
- change in power or influence
- loss of time better used for something else

Though any negative outcome is possible, think about what you can do to minimize the most significant, likely one related to what you are postponing. Your responses to any of the following may help you avoid or weaken its impact.

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

If you decide to take action, start with one small, low-risk step you've identified. Briefly describe it below with a specific date and time for follow through in the next several days:

Here are additional ways to ease yourself forward.

- Build on or select from relevant, effective approaches of others.
- Adapt your pertinent strengths to deal with 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 four ideas, add your own below:

Just in case you find you are wasting your precious time or fooling yourself, just say “stop” 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 larger 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 several days until you create a rhythm that promotes momentum. Then give additional time to the matter in ways that make sense.

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

Note: Explore *Procrastination* by Jane Burka and Leonora Yuen for additional ideas and guidance, but avoid just studying the problem instead of taking manageable action.

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