



5 REASONS PEOPLE DITHER, DAWDLE AND PUT THINGS OFFAND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.

Ever found yourself saying “One of these days I’m going to” but then finding ‘one of those days’ never happens? Or find yourself with so much to do but little desire to tackle any of it? What about the time you were determined to stick to your New Years resolution only to find your initial enthusiasm on the wane by January 2nd?

If you can relate to any of the above, you have found yourself caught in the great procrastination trap. Procrastinating (delaying taking action) can lead to increased stress, a lack of fulfilment and rob you of living a more enjoyable life. How do I know? I’m talking from experience. I delayed tidying my garage for two years and then wondered why I’d been putting it off for so long when I finally tackled it. De-cluttering my office was a task I wish I’d done sooner..... about five years sooner! It was only when I felt my stress levels were becoming unacceptably high, that I finally decided clutter and calm were not compatible. And I have been a master of deluding myself into thinking that the reason I haven’t made that difficult phone call is due to a lack of time, rather than the real reason, which is I felt uncomfortable about making it. So why do we do it? Here are five reasons:

- 1. Failure Focus.** We choose to focus our thoughts on ‘what if I fail’, which can render us powerless to act. It undermines our confidence and self belief and we comfort ourselves with the notion that ‘if I don’t attempt something, I can never be accused of failing’. That’s true. And neither can you experience the emotional highs gained from achievement and success.
- 2. Comfort Blanket Syndrome.** Taking action may at times require us to leave our world of familiarity, safety and security. Yet when we do something new or different, it can feel strange initially. This feeling of uncertainty can see us reaching out for our comfort blanket of previous habits and behaviour and withdraw from our new challenge.
- 3. Frozen By Feelings.** We can sometimes allow our feelings to dictate whether or not to take action. So we wait until we feel motivated or feel creative. Put simply, emotions can take our actions hostage.
- 4. Illusions Of Activity.** You may appear busy, but busy doing what exactly? Planning, discussing and researching may all be very necessary, but there comes a point when only action will do.
- 5. Conned By Complacency.** “There’s no rush I’ll wait till I’m older I’ll start it in the New Year”. There is always some reason to put off taking action today. As time passes, we delude ourselves into believing ‘There’s plenty of time’ whilst we drift along in a haze of complacency.



SO WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

There's probably no one single solution, but the following will certainly help:

- 1. Don't confuse activity with effectiveness.** Are you filling your time with lots of activity in order to avoid addressing the real issue? Ask yourself "Is what I'm doing really necessary and worthwhile?"
- 2. Just start it.** Quit worrying about completing the task, just start it. Action brings motivation.
- 3. Tackle the nasties first.** 'Nasties' are tasks that you are not looking forward to doing. By delaying acting on the them, you allow stress to build up at a subconscious level. Tackle them first and then once they're out of the way, you've got something to look forward to.
- 4. Reward your progress.** Give yourself mini rewards when you complete a task. Just finished a nasty? Then give yourself permission to start a pleasurable task.
- 5. Develop double vision.** Visualise what will happen if you delay taking action. What will the consequences be? How do you feel about that? Now visualise the task successfully completed. Imagine how you'll feel. What will be the benefits of having that task done? Allow those positive emotions to spur you into action.
- 6. Make a date with a mate.** Ask a friend or colleague to 'act as your conscience'. Make yourself accountable to someone who can also provide you with some moral support and encouragement. Want to lose weight or quit smoking? It's easier to do so with someone else than on your own. So find a mate who won't allow you to procrastinate.
- 7. Learn to S.U.M.O. (Shut Up, Move On).** Constantly replaying reasons not to do something inside your head? Say to yourself "It's time to Shut Up the dithering and Move On to the acting." Then decide what's the first thing you need to do and get on and do it!

Perhaps it's time we all learnt and lived by the Latin phrase *Carpé Diem*, meaning 'Seize the day!' Life is short so lets determine to make the most of it.