

S P E C I A L R E P O R T

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PROCRASTINATION TRANSFORMING FAST ACTION STRATEGIES



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TAKING ACTION

It's A Great Time To Make A Life Change.

When we decide to make changes in our lives, one of the biggest obstacles we may need to overcome is procrastination. We want to change (don't we?), yet we keep putting off the very steps that will create the desired results. At times we might feel like a crazy person, starting and stopping, starting and stopping. Why can't we just get it together once and for all?

Unfortunately, it's not that simple unless we develop an iron will. In the meantime, you may decide to come up with strategies that ease your transition through changes. Here are *six strategies* that can help:

1. *Use obvious reminders* - One of the hardest parts of forming new habits is actually remembering to perform

the new habits we are trying to put in place! A habit, by definition, is something we do automatically. When we operate on autopilot, we might actually forget the promises we've made to ourselves. We might grab a cookie and start munching mindlessly on it, even though we vowed to avoid sugar. Or we might realize, 10 minutes before bed time, that we never did find time to exercise that day.

The easiest way to overcome this forgetfulness is to place visible reminders in obvious places. Try using brightly colored sticky notes and colored markers. You can even get creative and add stickers and glitter if it helps catch your attention. Then stick them on the refrigerator, the bathroom mirror, the dashboard of your car - wherever you might need a little wake up call. However, try to limit the notes to no more than 3 or 4, and be sure to change them around frequently so you don't become accustomed to them and begin to overlook them.

You can also create a planner for yourself and get into the habit of using it every day. A cheap, simple planner is a 6"x9" lined, spiral-bound notebook. Each evening, set aside 10 or 15 minutes to write all of your tasks for the next day, including the new habits you are trying to adopt. Place the notebook in an obvious location, and you can even use a brightly colored "READ ME" note on the front so it is the first thing you notice when you wake up the next day. Over time you will get into the groove of your new habits and find you don't need the reminders anymore.

2. *Envision the outcome* - We often avoid tasks that we feel won't be enjoyable. Instead, take some time to think about why you will enjoy your activities, even if it's simply the outcome that makes you feel inspired. State your reasons aloud, and affirm the good reasons why you should get moving. For example, "I enjoy working out because it makes me feel good, I can release tension, and I get that great endorphin rush!" Then take a few minutes to visual-

ize the outcome in your mind. See yourself with a strong, firm, healthy body. Imagine yourself having plenty of energy to run around and play with the kids. See yourself in a slinky new dress and heels. After just a few minutes of these visualizations, you may suddenly appreciate the wisdom of huffing and puffing and sweating for 30 minutes and make that workout a priority.

3. *Psych yourself up* - Repeat after me: "I want to do this. I can do this. I deserve to do this. I am powerful enough to create the life I want. I refuse to be held back by my fears and negative habits. I am capable of so much more than I've done so far. No matter how successful I get, there is always room for improvement and growth. Yes I can, yes I can, yes I can!" Using affirmations like this, you will feel your resolve grow stronger, and your excitement build, and you will actually look forward to taking the steps that lead you down the path to success.

4. *Just five minutes* - If you're still struggling to get moving, vow to yourself that you will begin working on your tasks and stick with it for just five minutes. Five minutes is nearly nothing! Tell yourself that you can do anything for five minutes, and simply start. If you know that you only have to work on it for five minutes, it will seem less overwhelming and that will often be enough to nudge you into action. After the five minutes are up, give yourself permission to stop if you really want to. More often, however, you will decide to keep going. It's the start that holds so many of us back.

5. *Reward yourself* - Once you've gotten started and worked on your goals for at least 5 minutes, give yourself a pat on the back! This can be verbal praise, or an actual physical reward like a new book or trinket you've been wanting to buy. If funds are tight, your rewards don't have to cost anything; how about a 15 minute bubble bath or a visit to a favorite website? In fact, make it a priority to praise yourself often. Encourage yourself just like you

would a best friend or loved one who is working on making their dreams come true. Become your own cheerleader!

6. *Consistency wins the game* - Remember that forming new habits and overcoming procrastination is a moment to moment decision. It would be great if we could just decide to change and have it be so, but it doesn't usually work that way. We need to become aware of our self-defeating actions, and make the effort to change them moment to moment, day to day, week to week. In fact, keep that in mind when setting your goals. Rather than setting yourself up for failure by vowing, "From now on I will..." turn it around and say, "Just for today, I will..." This makes change less intimidating and you won't feel so pressured to be perfect.

In the end, it is our willingness to keep getting up again after we've stumbled or fallen that will eventually

strengthen our will and lead us along the path to success. So, if you have been struggling with procrastination, don't despair! Simply set yourself up for success by developing strategies that will blast your excuses right out of the water.

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