

STOP Procrastinating START Clearing



Why do we procrastinate, despite knowing it's against our best interests? The fact is that procrastination is simply part of being human. It is the result of your emotions overtaking your reasonable, rational thinking. But you can give the logical side of your brain the upper hand. Here are my top suggestions to overcome procrastination.

UNDERSTANDING PROCRASTINATION

Many factors contribute to procrastination, so it helps to understand how these interact before we start to tackle them.

Overcoming procrastination and getting into action is all about motivation. When you are motivated enough, you will not procrastinate. But we need to understand all the factors that influence your degree of motivation and how they relate.

Let's use The Procrastination Equation (thanks to author of the book by the same name Piers Steel) to understand more.

$$\text{Motivation} = \frac{\text{Expectancy} \times \text{Value}}{\text{Impulsiveness} \times \text{Delay}}$$

On the top half, **Expectancy** refers to the chance of an outcome occurring, while **Value** refers to how rewarding that outcome is.

On the bottom **Impulsivity** refers to how, the more impulsive you are, the less you like to delay gratification. While **Delay** relates to how long you must wait to receive the expected reward.

There's an example on the next page to help understand this model.



Let's take an example of an imaginary tax rebate. Imagine that somewhere in your cluttered office you have piece of paperwork that will enable you to claim a tax rebate. We'll score each item out of ten.

SCENARIO ONE

You know for sure the paperwork is there. **Expectancy** you will get the positive outcome is high: 8/10

It will enable you to claim a £2,000 rebate. **Value** is high: 9/10

You are not very **impulsive**: 3/10

The tax return has to be done next week and you will get the rebate within a few days of applying. **Delay** is low: 2/10.

Let's plug those numbers in:

$$\frac{(\text{Expectancy}) 8 \times (\text{Value}) 9 = 72}{(\text{Impulsiveness}) 3 \times (\text{Delay}) 2 = 6}$$

$$72 \div 6 = 12$$

SCENARIO TWO

You suspect the paperwork *may* be there. **Expectancy** you will get the positive outcome is medium: 6/10

It will only enable you to claim a £40 rebate. **Value** is low: 2/10

You are still not very **impulsive**: 3/10

Now, the tax return is in six months which means that you won't get the rebate until then. **Delay** is high: 8/10.

Let's plug those numbers in:

$$\frac{(\text{Expectancy}) 6 \times (\text{Value}) 2 = 12}{(\text{Impulsiveness}) 3 \times (\text{Delay}) 8 = 24}$$

$$12 \div 24 = 0.5$$

You can see how the motivation will be much lower in the second scenario, so you would be far more likely to procrastinate.

To reduce procrastination and increase motivation for any task (in this case your declutter project), you want to increase the scores for the top half of the equation, and reduce the score for the bottom half. Let's look at how we do that.



Let's look at the top half first. Remember, **Expectancy** refers to the chance of an outcome occurring, while **Value** refers to how rewarding that outcome is.

EXPECTANCY

Assuming you actually stopped procrastinating and tackled your decluttering project, how likely do you think you would feel good and have a positive outcome as a result of completing it?

Remember, to reduce procrastination you want to increase the score for the top half of the equation. So, list five ways you can increase the expectation of a positive outcome. EG: increase your skills by watching some training, enlist the help of someone with skills and experience, or get some equipment to make the task easier.

1

2

3

4

5

Another huge factor around expectancy is perfectionism.

Do you believe you have to clear your space perfectly in order to get a positive outcome? If so, then realistically your expectation of getting a positive outcome is going to be pretty low. Because perfection is almost impossible to achieve.

CHALLENGE PERFECTIONISM

I like to subvert the old saying, changing it to:

*'If a job's worth doing,
it's worth doing badly.'*

Meaning, if it is important then doing it badly is better than not doing it at all.



VALUE

How highly do you value the outcome of your declutter project?

The more you value the outcome, the less chance you will procrastinate. List four things you value about clearing and reorganising your space.

1

2

3

4

If you don't value it that highly, how does it contribute to other areas of your life you do value. This will increase its perceived value, making you less likely to procrastinate. EG, will it increase the value of your home, or create more space for that creative project you have been dreaming about doing.

If you struggle to do this, think of an enticing reward that you can give yourself when you complete your declutter project. You may not value the outcome of the task itself, but you do value the reward you will give yourself for completing it.

List the costs of procrastination.

List some of the ways clutter affects your life, finances, stress, happiness, relationships health etc. By becoming more aware of the negative costs of not clearing your space, the value of doing it will increase.



Let's look at the bottom half now. **Impulsivity** refers to your sensitivity to delay. The more impulsive you are, the less you like to delay gratification, while **Delay** relates to how long, you must wait to receive the payout, that is the expected reward.

HOW IMPULSIVE ARE YOU?

If you are easily distracted, focus on how to reduce distractions. List the things that are most likely to distract you from starting or completing your declutter project:

Now think of ways to reduce these each of these distractions

UNPLUG

Reduce distractions provided by digital devices. Switch off your phone or put it in another room, shut down the WiFi if you don't need it for what are avoiding. Use apps and settings on your devices to block distracting sites. Disabling digital distractions gives you no choice but to work on what's really important.



DELAY

Remember, delay relates to how long, you must wait to receive the payout, that is the expected reward. We want to reduce the delay, so one way to do that is to break the task down into stages and decide on a small reward for completing each stage.

You can also reduce the delay by bringing the time forward or speeding up the process. How are you going to do that? For example, you could book a week off work, enlist the help of a friend or get in touch with a professional organiser.

SUMMARY

If you can reduce the impact of delay and impulsiveness, and increase your expectation of success and how high you value that success, you will have a great chance of beating your procrastination.

Good luck

FINAL THOUGHT

Most of us struggle with procrastination.

Do not use it as a way to reprimand yourself, that only demotivates you.