

TIME

Protecting Our Most Precious Resource





EDITORIAL | KERUL KASSEL

The Spanish have an old saying:
“Tomorrow is the busiest day of the week,”
and for many of us, it’s too true.

Procrastination gobbles up our most
precious resource: **Time.**



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There are things you're putting off — goals you've been remiss about pursuing, projects waiting endlessly for completion. You've tried discipline and will-power, but neither have had much staying power. And since a popular definition of insanity is "trying the same thing over and over again, while expecting a different result," it may be time for a new approach.

Here are some radical strategies for combating procrastination. Give them a whirl, do some experimentation — they might just work better than you had imagined.

Embrace your imperfections — and stop trying to be normal! We all know we're not perfect and we never will be, but that doesn't stop many of us from trying. While most of us are still attempting to perfect our own personal version of ideal, or at least as close as we can get to it, we still get tied up in how far less-than-perfect we actually are.

Have you noticed that whenever you find yourself lacking in some way your productivity level plummets? Have you noticed that when you or others make disparaging remarks about your abilities, it negatively influences your effectiveness?

You may be uncertain about what to expect of yourself once you start being more self-compassionate. But don't worry, that's a very normal part of the change process. Instead of disparaging yourself, see what you need to do now to correct the situation, and what you can do in the future to prevent it from happening again.

Drop your tired old goals completely. You know those desires you keep beating yourself up about? The ones you've never been able to accomplish or maintain? Drop those goals, at least for the moment — and maybe forever.

These kinds of "historical" goals aren't typical accomplishments, but rather the result of months or years of continually applying effort and resolve. You must decide daily (or many times each day with some) or weekly to persistently advance toward your objective. After all, if we lose weight, we need to keep it off. Once we get organized, we have to put effort into keeping it that way. Once we create a financial plan, we have to follow it over decades to achieve the financial independence and stability we want. Just drop 'em!

It's important to understand that this doesn't mean you must give up your old goals, or that you will never be successful in achieving them, or that using traditional methods won't work. Those kinds of approaches do work, but they take effort, struggle and friction, and they suffer from a lack of sustainability.

One of two things will happen. Either you'll be so relieved to be done with that goal that you will have more energy and enthusiasm for other important goals in your life (it's likely that there are quite a few of them), or you'll realize that the goal is too important and you'll be re-energized to find new resources, support and tactics to get on a sustainable track.

Hire a hit man to kill you if you don't follow through. Okay, so this isn't meant literally, but you get the drift. You want to actually make putting it off harder than following through.

Who (or what) is your "hit man"? You may have a variety of them. Everyone is different, and what works for someone else may not work for you. A willingness to be frank and truthful with yourself will reveal the answer. The "hit man" has to sting at least a little, or it won't be effective and may backfire.

A few years ago, there was a news article about a man who was overweight and wanted to go on a diet. He hated to cook, and he usually ate in restaurants. He knew he'd be likely to lose weight if he wasn't able to eat out, so he came up with a novel solution. He created "Wanted" posters featuring his picture and he offered anyone who saw him in a restaurant a \$1,000 reward. He posted these in all the

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restaurants he usually ate in, and in other places where he often went. This was a powerful “hit man” for him — enough so that he accomplished his goal and his story landed in the news.

Once you find a successful “hit man,” it may work for you forever, or it might start losing its punch after a while. That’s normal. Be creative and get help in devising a new one.

Don’t take “yes” for an answer. Most of the time when we add something to our to-do list, we don’t really give much thought as to whether it’s something that we *really* need to do, how we might accomplish it and whether we’re really committed to doing so.

Before you include anything on your to-do list, it needs a brief examination. Could it be that you’re just telling yourself you’ll do something without real intent and strategy to follow through? If so, don’t bother adding it to your list. You know what happens. You say you’ll do it, and then you ignore it, deny it, say you’ll do it just after you finish reading the paper, your email, or the television show is over. You believe you have good intentions. And, for the most part you do, especially when you create the intention! But you have to ask yourself if your intentions are serious and realistic.

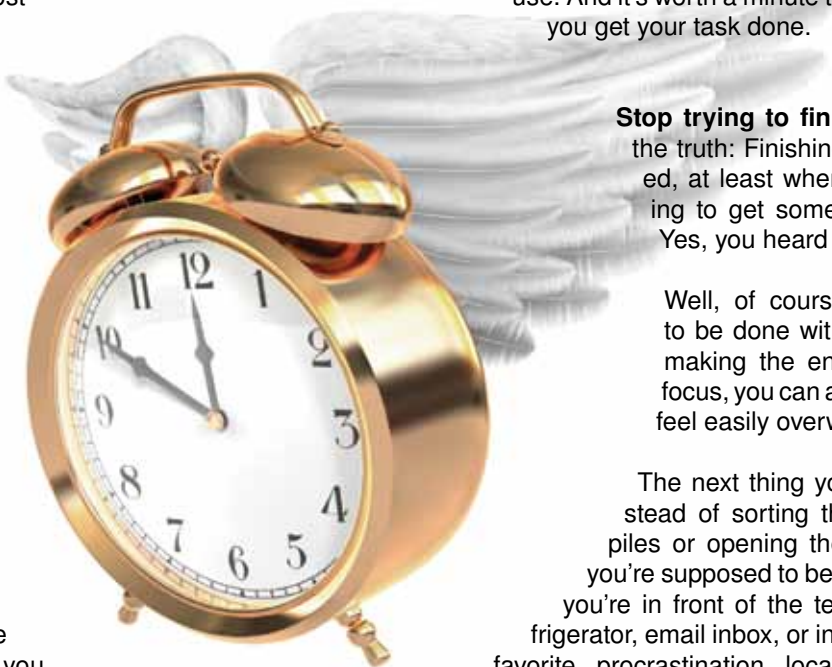
Intention without action is like a car without wheels; you may have a vehicle, but it’s really hard to get anywhere. So stop intending.

When you catch yourself making a promise to take care of

something, recognize your tendency to postpone it until another time. Don’t bother making that promise.

Don’t say “yes” and then neglect or forget to plan it.

Ironically, going from a knee-jerk “yes” to a well-executed and finished task is a pretty short leap. Usually, all it takes is the use of a calendar, a reminder system and a fitting consequence or reward plan. Sounds like a lot you say? The system takes less than a minute to use. And it’s worth a minute to make sure you get your task done.



Stop trying to finish. Here’s the truth: Finishing is overrated, at least when you’re trying to get something done. Yes, you heard correctly.

Well, of course you want to be done with it! But by making the end-goal your focus, you can and often will feel easily overwhelmed.

The next thing you know, instead of sorting through your piles or opening the document you’re supposed to be working on, you’re in front of the television, refrigerator, email inbox, or in some other favorite procrastination location. When your eyes are trained to see only the finish line, it can seem really far away. It feels like you’ll never get there, or it will be a long, painful slog to reach it.

The next step is manageable, and you’re more likely to take it, especially when you’re not staring down a grueling slog. Once your focus is *only* on the next step, the entire project will feel less arduous. Keep starting. Eventually you will finish, and it’s likely to be an easier and earlier finish than if you were only focusing on the end, from the start. ^{as}

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