

## **Easing your way through procrastination**

### **By Joan Weir**

Have you ever put off doing an important task – your website, your marketing plan, your tax return? Your deadline is looming but instead of working on your task, you start answering your emails, reading your favourite on-line forum, tidying your desk – anything except what you're supposed to be working on.

You know you need to get moving on that tax return, but... it feels too hard, you don't know where to start, or you're just not in the mood for it. So you focus on other "important" stuff – anything to keep you busy so that you can justify to yourself why you're not doing that tax return. Sound familiar? Let's delve a little deeper.

#### **What is 'procrastination'?**

Wikipedia defines procrastination as "a behaviour which is characterized by deferment of actions or tasks to a later time...[It] may result in stress, a sense of guilt, the loss of personal productivity, the creation of crisis and the disapproval of others for not fulfilling one's responsibilities or commitments. These combined feelings can promote further procrastination." Great – it just gets worse!

#### **The productive side of procrastinating**

But there is some good news. Procrastinators can actually achieve lots.

Procrastinating does not mean you do absolutely nothing. In fact, procrastinators do lots of things on their to-do list. Take me for example – while putting off writing this newsletter, I have got up-to-date with all my emails, tidied and cleaned the house really really well, done some gardening, updated my financials, made some phone calls, and read background papers for my next school Board meeting ...all in all, you could say I have been extremely productive.

#### **Avoidance and guilt**

But the reason I did all those things was because it was a way of avoiding doing what was more important. Yes I was motivated to do useful tasks, but doing those tasks lower down on my list was a way of not doing the task higher up my list – this newsletter. Also by being busy, I got to alleviate some of those guilt feelings around not doing the newsletter. Neat, eh?

So how do you get to the task on top of your list?

#### **Take the easy road**

No I don't mean sitting back, relaxing and visualising the finished product! But start with what is easy – even if this means not doing it the way you were "told".

For example, a client who was very good at procrastinating was struggling with writing his business plan. After I got him to put aside how he thought he 'should' write it, I asked, "Ok, what part would be easy to write?" Straight away he replied that he knew who his target market was, so writing that would be easy. Great. Now he could get going. It didn't matter what section of the business plan he started with. The important thing was to start.

#### **Momentum as an unseen force**

Once you start, you will soon gain momentum, and with that a sense of achievement that will spur you on to complete the task. Momentum becomes an unseen force that creates more energy. It means you can keep going – instead of avoiding, deliberating, thinking, and pondering.

### Start without knowing the end

The other trick here is that you don't need to know all the steps along the way, or exactly how the finished product will look. You don't need all the answers straight away. You just need to start. Momentum will carry you forward.

Next time you feel you are avoiding that important task, look for the easy road, find that small part that you can do easily, and make a start!

"There are only two mistakes one can make along the road to truth: not going all the way, and not starting." (Buddha)

(Joan Weir is a qualified Personal/Business Coach who specialises in coaching women who want to succeed in business and in life. For a free introductory coaching session, go to [www.businessandpersonalcoaching.com](http://www.businessandpersonalcoaching.com))