

Procrastination Interruption

Do you feel stuck, inert, frozen, distracted, avoiding, or disengaged from productivity somehow? Here's an exercise for you to try. Use it to break the cycle of not doing what you want to get done.

- STEP 1** Open your journal and make four columns.
- STEP 2** In Column One, name the task you wish/want/need to be doing at that moment but are avoiding.
- In Column Two, write how you feel about doing the task at hand.
- In Column Three, write how you feel about not doing it.
- In Column Four, write how you expect to feel when working on the task.
- STEP 3** Be thorough. If you have trouble, use your imagination and let the thoughts and feelings flow without regard to whether they make sense. Spend 15 minutes thinking, feeling, and writing. (Listening to music while you write can help.)
- STEP 4** (This is the hard but fun part.) Without further ado, without thinking, as if someone is picking you up from your seat, just haul off and start working on the task. Tell yourself it's just for 5 minutes. At the end of 5 minutes, tell yourself you might as well go for 10 minutes more. At the end of the 15 minutes, decide if another 15 would be all right. Use a timer if you like and remember to breathe and open your heart to this new experience. See it as a path you're trying out as an experiment. No need to promise yourself to change. Just go through these motions. This process is about imagination, not will.
- STEP 5** Go back and see if your predictions in Column Four were correct.
- STEP 6** Write about the experience of spending productive time on the task, including new thoughts, feelings, and surprises.

You will probably notice a difference in your procrastination patterns after performing this exercise only three or four times. Why does this approach to processing what's really going on during periods of frustrating delay work? It's about the power of our habits.

Whether we are productive, inactive, or counterproductive, every action we take is regulated by our habits. We run on habits like computers run on software. Maintaining a habit is much easier than changing one because the code is already written. But modifying an established pattern of behavior, like writing code, takes skill and practice.

This exercise will teach you the skill and you will provide the practice. The rest comes naturally. If, deep down, you don't really want to become more productive there's probably a good reason. That reason could be unconscious so it may be difficult to figure it out alone. A professional skilled in depth psychology could be helpful. But if you truly do want to think, feel, and act differently, give this exercise a try. It's not hard and takes minimal effort and commitment. You'll probably be surprised how well such a simple, little exercise can work to help you out of your slump.