

How to Put Off Success through Procrastination:
The Art of Deception.

The Gauntlet / Mind Over Madness by Al Lewis

Welcome.

Who Wants to Put Off Success?

I mean, really, I don't think anyone wants to do that, but we all do this at one time or another by succumbing to specious thinking (superficially plausible, but actually wrong) that supplants courage with doubt, and action with inaction, in an attempt to protect ourselves from future harm.

There's nothing ostensibly wrong with doubt, caution and inaction if it enhances one's prospects of survival in a complex, dangerous world; even noted psychologist, Abraham Maslow, established survival as man's first-and-foremost primal need; but when wants are thwarted by mere fear of the unknown and retreat underscored by false-thinking, well then, we must strive to expose the evil doers (bad thoughts, false-thinking and resultant strategies) for what they are, false prophets, and counterbalance the bad with right-thinking that facilitates release and freedom to succeed.

This article is about (1) Success and how it often is put off by nothing more than procrastination (2) How procrastination evolves from engrams to blocks-to-a-calling and (3) How to dispatch them with ease.

Sidebar / An engram is a term used in Scientology and Dianetics for memo-

ries of past painful events not normally accessible to the conscious mind.

Procrastination / If you've gotten this far, congratulations. Four whole paragraphs. Good job.

A serious procrastinator would never get around to reading even this far. Aside from a humorous acceptance that most have regarding procrastination – *If it weren't for the last minute, I wouldn't get anything done* – the facts aren't funny. Procrastination is the biggest thief in the history of mankind. It has robbed people of success, happiness and fulfillment in their personal, family and business lives.

Procrastination is more than simply putting things off. It involves a multitude of strategies for avoiding the completion of sometimes even the simplest of tasks by dawdling, delaying, negativism, perfectionism, etc. It is any conscious or unconscious attempt to avoid the completion of a task you desire to perform or must perform. The first step in dealing with procrastination, and to achieving success rather than putting it off, is to understand the basic reason for it.

When you procrastinate regarding a task, it is because the completion of the task bears an implicit threat to your self-esteem. This one facet of procrastination has many faces and is guised in many forms.

Procrastination: The Art of Deception.

Passive Aggression and Procrastination / Many times in a relationship, such as with a parent or employer, anger that we fear expressing is sublimated because we can't afford to lose the relationship. Therefore, we all, everyone one of us at one time or another, learn to express anger and/or resentment toward the authority figure in a disguised form: procrastination. We put off doing what they (the authority figure) either want us to do or wish we would do to hurt them but we, by doing this, only hurt ourselves. This is the false-thinking underscoring the get-even strategy known as Passive Aggression.

Pressure & Procrastination.

Many people grow up in a constant atmosphere of pressure and over coercion. From waking in the morning until going to bed at night, they are subjected to a constant barrage of commands: It's time to get up; Brush your teeth; Quit watching TV; Do Your homework; Go to bed; Go to sleep, etc. This doesn't even begin to list all demands poured on kids by teachers, hallway and lunch room monitors, coaches, bus drivers, etc.

This form of parental anxiety about a child's welfare is an environment that many people lived with twenty-four hours out of every day. Even in their dreams, they were

being ordered around. Pressure like this creates a threat to a child's autonomy, the right which is a significant part of self-esteem. To protect one's autonomy, the right to make choices, the child learns to aggress against the controllers in passive ways. Dawdling, delaying, and forgetting are all expressions by the child of the subconscious desire to say, "I don't want to. Get off my back!"

When this child becomes an adult, two things occur. First, any relationship with an authority figure creates the anticipation of being pressured, and stimulates a rebellion even when no actual or unreasonable demands have been made; and, secondly, they aggress even against themselves when striving to achieve goals seeing this, even, as coercion.

If you find that you are constantly putting pressure on yourself to succeed, to work harder or get more done; if the child exemplified herein is you, you will create a command-resistance cycle. One part of your mind will be demanding, and the other part of your mind, through procrastination, will be saying, "drop dead." Procrastination is an attempt by the individual to protect self-esteem in the form of autonomy. You not only have a right, you have a need to know that you can make choices.

Personally, I learned early on in my career to set easy to attain goals on a daily, weekly and monthly basis; and, yet, even with these I only "demand" of myself to "strive" to be 50% to 70% effective at reaching them, knowing that even at this rate I will outperform most everyone I consider a competitor. Once in a while, though, I hit the 100% done mark. I'm happy either way, even when I totally fail.

Punishment & Procrastination.

Many children grow up constantly afraid of being punished for wrongdoing. This punishment may come in the form of physical punishment, such as beating or spanking, or it may be verbal punishment in the form of constant criticism: It's all your fault; What a stupid thing to do; Why didn't you do it right? Many parents believe that you can make a child better by physically or verbally beating the devil out of them. Others simply use the children as scapegoats.

If you suffered from unfair and unjust punishment, you may experience a burning desire to get even, but how does a child get even with their parents? One method is certain. You always can depend upon the fact that your parents wanted you to function: get good grades, perform chores and be a good child. The method for getting even, then, is to not function. Don't get the good grades, don't perform chores, or do anything that will give them pleasure.

You may have continued this pattern now that you're an adult. On the one hand, you blame, name-call, ridicule, and shame yourself for not functioning or performing adequately; and, on the other hand, you continue to get even, even against self-beratement, by not functioning.

When the doing of something makes the punishing authority right, you'll procrastinate. When the doing of something makes a punishing authority feel pleasure, you'll procrastinate. When the doing of something demands that you admit that you're bad, you'll procrastinate. This form of procrastination is an attempt to get revenge on the pun-

ishing authority (real or imagined) by not functioning as they wish you to.

The problem, of course, is that the punishing authority most probably is no longer around and the only one getting hurt, again, is you. It is an attempt to protect self-esteem by refusing to engage in behaviors that would be the implicit acceptance of a negative status.

Fear of Success and Procrastination / Ironically, while almost everyone talks about wanting to be a success, some people actually fear it. The attainment of success represents a threat to them that they unconsciously avoid by procrastination.

Success, after all, brings with it obligation, responsibility, schedules, benchmarks, reporting, review, goals, objectives, collaboration, performance and then, maybe, even the expansion of obligation by having to invest the success in the accouterments of success: additional items of dress or equipment, stuff, things like additional office space, employees and associates, cars, houses, vacations, etc., all the trappings that drag along with them even more burden of responsibility.

Success adds up, that's a certainty. Maybe, better to be a loser, that's a way out or, maybe, to find a middle road? Buddha said that about twenty-five hundred years ago.

Feeling Unworthy and Procrastination / Some homes are dominated by an atmosphere of sin and punishment. When you're bad, you must be punished. As adults, these individuals feel guilty most of the time because of real or imagined wrongdoing. Therefore, they punish themselves by not permitting themselves to be successful. When they

are successful, they feel an increased sense of unworthiness. Given congratulations or compliments, they respond with, "Thanks, but I really don't deserve it."

Others have a deep-seated and usually unquestioned belief that to be successful is to be sinful. They've been taught that the successful people of this world got that way because of sin and corruption and that righteous people are all poor and suffering. As adults, these individuals may talk of success and make efforts to attain it, but in actual fact, they consistently defeat themselves so that they can be poor, suffering and righteous.

Breaking the Family Pattern & Procrastination / This is an unconscious use of procrastination to avoid success because significant others are not successful.

Here is a diagnostic clue for you. Imagine that you are more successful and better than your parents. If you find yourself vaguely uncomfortable with that idea, and sense that you want to resist it, you could be a victim of the fear of success. Be careful that you don't attempt to validate a parent's life, or a brother or sister's life by duplicating it. Remember that success of a child or brother or sister is not a negation, but an affirmation of the fullness of the family.

Playing Second Fiddle and Procrastination / Procrastination can be the result of a child's forced subordination to a power-hungry parent. Consider the parent whose self-concept is one of confidence and adequacy; so much that they walk into areas of responsibility where most fear to tread. They have such an intense need for recognition that

they are compulsively driven to do well.

Since they avoid anxiety by maintaining superiority, they place their children in a horrendous double-bind. Despising weakness, they demand that their child excel, but as soon as the child begins to succeed, the power-hungry parent feels their superiority threatened, turns on the child, and criticizes their efforts. This puts the child in an impossible position. They're criticized if they don't learn and develop and criticized if they do. As adults, these people feel anxiety whenever they begin to approach success. Success is associated with the wrath and criticism of a now absent parent, and fear is generated whenever it is imminent; because of this fear of success, procrastination becomes the method of choice in avoiding it.

Comfortable Mediocrity and Procrastination / Strange as it may seem, some people are afraid of success because it would be too much effort to change from mediocrity to success. Being successful means more than just having more money and living in a finer home. When a person becomes successful, many things change in his or her life. New friends, new attitudes, and new responsibilities. It can be quite comfortable to be mediocre and many people, while fantasizing about success, in reality don't want to expend the effort to obtain it. In this culture, not wishing to be successful is tantamount to cursing the flag, motherhood and apple pie.

These individuals satisfy the conflict by talking about success, wishing that they had it, bemoaning their fate because they don't and procrastinating to avoid it.

Fear of Failure and Procrastination / In the truest sense, most people don't fear failure, they fear the consequences of failure. When failure is associated with criticism or rejection, they fear failure because they don't want those consequences. They would have little trouble with failure if they simply viewed it as a process of elimination on the road to success. To avoid the consequences of failure they put off success through procrastination.

Protecting Self-Worth and Procrastination / Many children are raised under circumstances of conditional regard. Conditional regard is when the parents regard the child as worthy only when the child meets certain conditions. The conditions may be anything from getting good grades to making the team, to working around the house, but the attitude is always the same: the child only has worth when the conditions are met.

If you attach your worth to achievement, you can be paralyzed by procrastination. How much achievement is enough? At what level of achievement will you feel worthy? Here the person is in a real quandary. On the one hand, they feel unworthy if they don't achieve certain things. On the other hand, they fear the possibility of failure which might prove that they will never be worthy.

To deal with this dilemma, procrastinators have become adept at certain strategies. One of these is The Perpetual Preparation Strategy. In this strategy, the individual avoids the final fear of evaluation by always being in preparation to achieve, but never finishing anything completely.

The fear of failure fosters another

popularly used strategy called The Dependency Strategy. Here the individual procrastinates with the unspoken belief that if he waits long enough, someone else will do it for him. As adults, they usually find themselves married to “rescuers” who end up carrying the brunt of the responsibility in the relationship. The procrastinator puts things off long enough so that the tension becomes unbearable to the “rescuer” who rushes in and completes the task.

Perfectionism and Procrastination / Perfectionism is very similar to protecting self-worth but with an ironic twist. Unlike the individual who sets high standards of excellence, attains them and feels satisfied, the perfectionist sets high standards, attains them and is dissatisfied. He or she concludes that the standards were probably too low. New, higher standards are set, but always just out of reach, leaving the perfectionist perpetually disappointed and frustrated.

Perfectionism demands procrastination, because it defines the goal as the unattainable, therefore mandating failure. When the pursuit of excellence is associated with the feeling of failure, it will necessarily be avoided.

As an adult, the perfectionist uses a common strategy to avoid this feeling of failure. He puts off a task until the last minute, and then in a flurry of activity completes the task. Now the perfectionist has a perfect excuse. The accomplishment may be less than perfect, but after all, he only had a short time to do it. He unconsciously realizes that if he ever devoted his full effort to an activity, it will still not measure up to his

standards. The consequent feeling of failure must be avoided at all costs to protect self-esteem. He scrupulously avoids giving his full effort to any task to avoid the feeling of failure, and procrastination is the perfect method.

The Superman Syndrome and Procrastination / The Superman Syndrome is typified by an individual's attempt to establish superiority over other people. He boasts, brags, exaggerates and inflates his self-worth to astonishing proportions. He constantly exalts his great achievements of the past and boasts of his marvelous plans for the future; but his accomplishment in the present is always lacking.

He has such a compulsive need to avoid his fears of inferiority, he over-inflates his self-worth to compensate. He's not content to be good, he must be great! He has unshakable faith in his ability to master any area of endeavor. Unconsciously, he is aware that he is probably not of divine origin, and secretly fears to put his ability to the test and be found wanting. His method is simple: brag all you want, but avoid the performance. When performance is unavoidable, make sure you have plenty of excuses. You can see that procrastination is an invaluable implement in Superman's tool chest. He is very fond of the Perpetual Preparation Strategy described above.

Since he portrays himself as a person of superior ability, he frequently bites off more than he can chew. It is not uncommon for Superman to become inundated by responsibility demands and time conflicts. To handle these problems, he applies heavy doses of procrastination until they

go away. After a while, even his more ardent supporters cannot fail to notice the faded uniform and tarnished trophies, and simply quit believing in him.

How to Put Off Procrastination.

One of the first methods for putting off procrastination is to simply recognize the reason behind the procrastination. In reading the few causes of procrastination that have been described (there are more), you may find that you recognize yourself in one or more places. This is okay. When you procrastinate again, if you simply will take a moment to become aware of the reason that you are procrastinating, you then may reason with yourself as to whether or not you choose to continue to deal with the situation in that manner.

The simple recognition of motive and subjecting that motive to reason will frequently liberate new found energy that will permit you to proceed to get to where you want to go without delay.

Listen to Your Internal Dialogue / Putting off procrastination is helped by becoming aware of how you talk to yourself. You may be creating passive-aggression in your behavior by subjecting yourself to a barrage of self-complaint. If you talk to yourself all day long in ridiculing, humiliating, shaming, condemning words, you will resist “getting to where you want to go” through procrastination just as you did, possibly, as a child.

Learn to be forgiving, gentle and tolerant with yourself and talk to yourself in the same understanding manner that you would use to coax an employee into an improved performance.

Emphasize Freedom of Choice.

People procrastinate because of too much pressure. They're given the feeling that they don't have any choice and to protect their autonomy, they procrastinate.

Learn to emphasize your freedom of choice by never telling yourself that you have to do something. You don't have to do anything but die. The old adage, "Nothing is certain except for death and taxes," isn't even correct because you don't have to pay taxes; you may go to jail, but you don't have to pay them if you don't want to (yes, I know, more or less).

The reason we do a thing is not because we have to, but because we choose to experience the consequences of a behavior that gets us what we want in our life and work. To get by the barrier of procrastination, emphasize the way you will feel upon completing a task. Instead of haranguing yourself about having to complete it, avoid words like "should," "ought," "must," and "have to," and emphasize words like "I get to."

Very few people procrastinate about having a good time because nobody ever tells you that you have to have a good time; but pressure yourself to do productive work by saying or thinking things like, "I have to do this or that" produces a pressure that promotes procrastination.

Permit yourself to work. Permit yourself to be successful. Tell yourself you want to do something instead of you have to do something. Emphasize your freedom of choice and you will put off procrastination.

A final point in freedom of choice is that it's important to emphasize that you don't have to be successful. You can choose to be unsuccessful and that's your decision. Nobody can stop you from being a failure if that's what you want. So be clear that all choice is yours.

Don't Master the Magnificent.

As indicated, some people procrastinate because they set unattainable goals for themselves. Set smaller attainable tasks that emphasize the routine of behavior, instead of magnificent accomplishment. For instance, you may not be able to write a best seller, but you can complete a book; or perhaps you feel you can't complete a book, but you could write a chapter or make an outline. Break tasks up into their smallest component parts and complete them one at a time.

Rule the Routine / You may not make a million dollars in real estate this year, but you could get into your car, drive to some neighborhood within which you would like to have a listing, and call on twenty-five people to talk about selling today. Do this five days a week, five years running, and it's possible that you will make a million dollars.

When your goals are small enough to be attainable, you will reach the end of each day feeling successful. When you constantly set goals that are magnificent in scope, they may be fine for lunchtime braggadocio, but they will increase your potential to procrastinate.

If you learn to rule the routine, you will certainly master the magnificent.

Examine Your Expectations.

In keeping with the concept of ruling the routine, take a long hard

look at what you are expecting of yourself. Make sure that your expectations are realistic and attainable. Are you setting goals for yourself that demand procrastination because they're unattainable?

Your goals must be consistent with your ability, experience and circumstances. It will be far better for you to have a realistic income goal of a lower amount per year and attain that year after year, than to demand of yourself that you make some unattainable amount that you justify not making.

Be Ready to Change Your Lifestyle / Don't wait until you achieve certain goals to change patterns of behavior. Start acting, thinking and living right now as the success you strive to be. Gather friends around you that engage in behaviors consistent with the success you desire. Think, act and talk like the success you want to be and you will minimize procrastination due to resistance to change.

Conclusion.

You can see that we all, metaphorically speaking, run a gauntlet stretching back from birth to now.

Sidebar / A gauntlet is a double file of men facing each other armed with clubs or other weapons with which to strike an individual down who is made to run between them. An individual that does not make it through the gauntlet is exempt from participation in some club or organization, while a person that struggles through successfully gains full, unhindered access.

Parents, both mom and dad, siblings, extended family, friends, and authority figures of all kinds encountered through childhood, adolescence and adulthood represent

the gauntlet: the line of men seemingly seeking to strike us down by burdening us with roadblocks to success.

The roadblocks, of course, are specious thinking that supplant courage with doubt and action with inaction, and engrams (bad thoughts and false-thinking) defined at the beginning of this essay.

I often state in one writing or another that we in the Fellowship work with intelligence and not time and money. Procrastination impacts both time and money negatively so, therefore, when we practice it we are not working with intelligence. This is not smart. I think even a disenfranchised American worker (election time 2016) can see that. Facing it, therefore, is proof of intelligence. The choice is yours.

If you are a doubter regarding the impact of childhood experience on adult behavior, may I add that there is no distance in time between memories. How often have you had a thought about this or that, or selected a movie to watch on Cable that you haven't seen for a long time and realized that the experience recollected or the movie were each first experienced thirty-years prior, though it seems like just yesterday that you had the experienced or first watched the movie?

This happens all the time.

Experience long filed away as memory in the subconscious both positive and negative functions like a computer's operating system, driving both action and inaction subject to the operators input and motive; but, as we know, a computer does for us only what it can do subject to its programming and not everything we want it to do. It seems to have

a mind of it's own. Hmm, we invented the computer, didn't we, therefore it can't be anything more than a reflection of ourselves, can it?

Enough said.

Enter a no-limits realm of living manifest by clear thinking that starts by your reminding yourself daily that you will never be any more worthwhile than you are right now.

Success will not make you more worthwhile, it will simply produce a more enjoyable setting in which to appreciate your work. You do not work and achieve to be worthy, but because you are worthy.

You can put things off and still be successful, just so long as procrastination is one of the things put off, but I'm not telling you to do this.

The choice is yours.

Best wishes.



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