

92. Achieve Every Goal You Set Part 3: How to stop procrastinating and start taking action

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Welcome to the Empowered brain, the only podcast using science, psychology and coaching to help you rewire your brain and create a life you love with your host, Dr. Vanessa Calderon, a Harvard grad physician, master coach, and mother of two.

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Hi, friends. Welcome back. So we are doing our last episode on our three part series of achieving our goals. And today we are talking about procrastination, something that is so familiar to all of us. So before we dive into procrastination, just a quick summary of what we have been covering so far. So in part one of this series, we talked about your purpose of your goal, the type of goals.

So we talked about stretch goals, comfort goals, and fantasy goals, and how to actually set a goal. And we went through the SMART goals, but really why the SMART goals matter. So go back to Episode One of this part, so part one of the series if it's something that you want to go back and review, in part two, we talked about the success triad, which is the things that I've sort of realized and understood and created, to make sure that I have become successful, but also enjoy my life every day on my way towards success.

It's what I've taught my students and what I see over and over and over again, one of these things is usually the missing piece when someone is in achieving a goal. So the success triad, again, is intention, self discipline, and self compassion. I talked a lot about self compassion on that last episode. So go back to that episode, so you can understand how those three pieces work together. And quickly on self compassion.

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One of my students shared a really beautiful story about self compassion. So she says that, um, she wanted to set after joining our program, that journey, she wanted to set a goal, it was kind of like a stretch goal to do something new and different. So she enrolled in a martial arts class. She had never done it before, but it's something she wanted to do. So she shows up to the martial arts class, and she had never done it before she gets there. And everyone looks like they know what they're doing. And she doesn't. And she's standing there kind of at the outskirts, and she starts getting all of the self doubt, insecurity, her inner critic starts acting up. And she thinks that she might want to quit, she should just leave like, What is she doing there.

And she said that she used the tools of self compassion, of managing her mind and managing her emotions that she learned inside of the journey. And she was able to use those tools of self compassion to stay there that day, and complete the course. And now she's been doing martial arts, which is just

amazing. So I share that with you. Because I think it's just such a beautiful example of how beautiful and how simple self compassion works. And why it's important because for most of us, we get there and we'll either quit, or we will, you know, like, kind of bulldoze through, push your way through. And what I want to offer is that there's a third way that's possible, you don't have to quit, you don't have to be super hard on yourself, you can still stay and do it and love yourself while you're doing it. That's what's available self compassion.

Okay, today we are talking about procrastination. So what we're going to cover today is why we procrastinate what to do about it, and how to start taking action.

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Okay, so, procrastination, I'm going to just quickly review the cognitive thought model, and I talk a lot about the cognitive thought model and other episodes. So the cognitive thought model, essentially, you know, comes from the Stoics, 300 BCE. And what it asserts is, anytime something happens in our lives, it'll cause us to think a thought that thought will cause us to have a feeling that feeling will drive us to take an action. And that action is what creates all of our results in life. So when we procrastinate, we're procrastination fits in the cognitive thought model. So we have the circumstance, the thought, the feeling the action, the results, procrastination is an action. It's an action that we're taking. So you've always put procrastination in the action line. It's an action that we're taking. And it's usually an action that we're taking not to avoid, the actual thing we're avoiding. What we're avoiding is the feeling that that thing will cause us to feel.

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So I'm going to give you two examples that I see often. What I often see people trying to avoid is fear. Or sometimes it's some sort of like frustration or boredom. So they're trying to avoid fear or boredom. So the way fear shows up, for example, let's say that you are a perfectionist, you have a new project you want to start and you procrastinate on starting because you're afraid to fail or you're afraid to get it wrong. So when you think about that, the way it would work is you have something you need to do. Your thought is on afraid to start because I don't want to fail.

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And so what do you do you procrastinate on starting your task to begin with.

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Now, if you're a high achiever, same thing, you don't want to start because you don't want to get it wrong, maybe you need to learn more, do more, you're going to start later when you're ready.

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Or maybe you have this common thought error that nothing is ever good enough, you know, you can't start today, you can't start training for that marathon today, because it's not the right day, it's the middle of the week, you don't have the right workout clothes, your sneakers aren't the perfect sneakers. So whatever it is, you're avoiding starting something because you're either afraid to fail, you're afraid to do it wrong. Or you don't think anything is good enough yet. And those usually come from a feeling of fear,

a feeling of you know, afraid to feel disappointed, afraid to disappoint other people. Alright, the other side of that is boredom, or feeling unmotivated.

So for this, I want you to think about a time where you've had a task that you didn't want to start because you thought it was going to be tedious, or maybe boring, for example, taxes, or writing a grant or going back to edit something that you had to do. All of those types of things causes us to feel a little annoyed or frustrated. And so what we're avoiding is the feeling of boredom, the feeling of being of the tediousness, the feeling of just not wanting to do it. So the thought is I just don't want to do it. I'll do it tomorrow. And so then you procrastinate, you procrastinate. You procrastinate. And what does that cause it causes that thought that I'll just do it tomorrow to weigh so heavy on us because we've been procrastinating and now it's making it even worse. Now tomorrow's become next month.

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How many of you guys have had a closet you need to organize, but you keep saying I'll do it tomorrow. And now it's a month later. And now you have made the problem so big in your head, because you just didn't start and do it from the beginning.

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Alright, so what to do when we procrastinate. So the very first thing I want you to do is I want you to get clear as to what you do to procrastinate. And before that, let's take a step back, get clear on the feeling that you're avoiding? What are your most common feelings? I know for me, the two most common reasons I procrastinate. One is because I'm afraid to fail. So when I don't start something right away is usually because I'm afraid to fail. And the second reason why I procrastinate is because they think it's going to take too much time. And I hate things that are not that aren't don't get done fast. So if I think it's going to take too much time, I'll just avoid it.

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So what are the things? What are the feelings that you avoid? When you procrastinate? Get clear right now and answer that for yourself? What are the feelings that you avoid when you procrastinate?

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And now what I want you to do is I want you to get clear on your actions. What are the what are the three most common things you do to procrastinate? What are the three most common things you do to procrastinate? So for example, for me, I do pretty common things when I'm afraid to fail when I'm afraid to start something so I'm afraid to fail? What do I do? I go in, like, decide to clean up my inbox and do all my emails. And it doesn't feel negative because I feel like I'm being productive. But really, I'm just procrastinating.

So what is it that you do very commonly, people will just pick up their phone and scroll through social media. Or they'll think it's time to go clean their bathroom for the fifth time or you know, or like organize their shelves, or they'll go in there exercise. And again, exercises and cleaning, checking out your emails. None of that is bad. But when you're doing it to avoid something, now you're doing it to procrastinate, and you're trying to play a trick on yourself being like, oh, no, it's fine. I got to do this

anyway. But actually, what I want you to recognize is that these are the common things you do to procrastinate.

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Alright, so we got clear as to the feelings we're avoiding, we got clear as to the things we do when we procrastinate. And now what I want you to just imagine is, you know, I want you to ask yourself when you start to procrastinate. So in those moments, when you're starting to procrastinate, what is so fascinating is our, our brain and our body are so intricately connected, that our body takes cues from subconscious thoughts. So we don't always know that we're avoiding a task when you know, it's time to do something. And then we pick up our phone and go through social media. It's not always super clear that we're avoiding something.

But we know the way we're going to know that we're avoiding it is because we know when we go on social media, it's because we're trying to avoid something. So what I want you to ask yourself in those moments, you got clear on the things you do for me it's emails, it's social media. What is the third thing I do to procrastinate? I'm not totally clear yet but I want you to get clear. So what is it so social media for me emails for you might might be cleaning it might be doing something else. So

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What I want you to do is when you notice yourself taking those actions you might not, it might not be super clear that you're procrastinating. But when you notice yourself jumping to take those actions when you hadn't planned to do them, what I want you to ask yourself is what am I avoiding? What am I avoiding? I'm afraid to start something because So answer that question. I'm afraid to start something because and what what are you afraid to start on why?

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And what I want you to ask yourself also is how is this thought getting in the way of my larger purpose. And what is one action I can take today towards my larger goal. And remember, all you need is one small action every day to achieve your goal. That's it. Visualize, you know, an aeroplane that sets its navigation to get to its destination, all they need to do is to stay on track to get to their destination every day, or you know, every second every minute, they just need to stay on track. If they were to veer off by just one degree, they would be in a totally different place. What I want you to sort of think about is, if you were to just stay on track 1% Every day, how would you achieve your goal? What would that look like for you what would be possible for you?

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Now, I want to end this podcast by talking about something that I think is really important. And that's us being in tune with what our body needs. So oftentimes, when we procrastinate is because we're doing it from an unintentional thought, we're afraid to do something we're afraid to get started. We don't want to do it, because it will be boring, we think it will be tedious.

And what I want you to recognize is there are going to be times when you avoid doing something because you actually need to rest, there are going to be times when you do feel unmotivated, and you need to just get back onto self discipline and recommit. But there are other times where you're going to

be tired and exhausted. And the way to know the difference is to be in tune to your body. In those moments, you gotta be super clear as to what your body needs come from a place of true self compassion and true self love. And what I like to do is, I like to tell my students to think about themselves as being their loving best friend, that one best friend that just like totally loves them. They're super honest with them, but they're also call them out on their BS.

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Think about you being your loving, best friend, that best friend who will celebrate you when it's time, but who will also say, Hey, man, you're gonna work really hard, it's time to chill. Or, hey, you've been on that couch for a long time, it's time to get back up again and get to work.

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So when you think about yourself as being that best friend for yourself in those moments when you're feeling unmotivated, when you're feeling kind of tired. What I like to do is I like to ask myself, hey, Vanessa. Hey, Darlene, what is it that you truly need right now? What is it that I truly need right now. And then I just give myself a second, I pause and I listen, and I hear what's coming up. And sometimes what I need is just to finish XYZ task. And sometimes what I need is just to take a 15 minute break.

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So I want you to just try that for yourself and get really clear because again, this is where self compassion is so important. And you being in tune to your body and what your body needs really matters. Because of course, we don't want to always be procrastinating on our tasks, but there are times when perhaps we need to take a break. And that's okay, too.

Okay, my friends, what did we talk about today, we talked about where procrastination comes from. So we talked about the cognitive thought model and how procrastination is an action that we take, to not just avoid, sort of that thing we think we have to do, but to avoid the feeling that it's causing us we're afraid to fail, we're afraid to be disappointed or afraid to be annoyed or frustrated. And so we procrastinate on the task. We talked about how to recognize what we do when we procrastinate. So get clear on the things you do when you procrastinate. And we talked about what to do when you start taking those actions.

When you start procrastinating. We talked about what to do, ask yourself, What am I avoiding? What am I afraid to start doing right now? How is this start getting in the way of my larger purpose? And what would be possible if I took just one small action today towards my goal?

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Alright, right we fans, I hope you found a lot of value out of this three part series. And again, I want you to achieve every goal you set. I want you guys to go out there, set your goals get super clear on what you need to achieve them and do the work everyday to achieve your goals. And if you want help doing that, then I want to invite you into the journey where I will help you set those clear intentions get super clear. Create that plan of how you want to achieve it.

Make sure you're strengthening that muscle of self discipline creating the right habits for yourself. And then taking action every day and loving yourself along the way with self compassion. Alright, so your friends, I will talk to you next week.

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He's sweet friends. If you love what you're learning, then you've got to join us in the journey. It's my all inclusive program and the best community out there giving you the education you never knew you needed to help you create a life you love. Join us at [Vanessa Calderon md.com](http://VanessaCalderon.md.com) forward slash join. I'll see you there.