108. 3 Tools to Stop Procrastinating

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Hello, welcome back. You are listening to Episode 108. And today we are talking about procrastination. And I am going to give you three tools today so that you can stop procrastinating. But first, let's start with why. Why is it that we procrastinate? So I'll tell you one of the main reasons that high achievers procrastinate. The main reason high achievers procrastinate, it's not because they lack motivation. It's not because they're not hard workers. It's not because they don't have commitment. The number one reason that high achievers procrastinate is because they're afraid to fail. Or because they're afraid they want everything to be perfect. They want everything to be perfect, or they're afraid to fail, so they never get started.

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So you've probably experienced this yourself, you avoid starting something because the thought of it not being perfect, or that the work is going to take so long to be perfect, or you're afraid of failing is causing you some sense of dread.

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The other main reason why high achievers procrastinate is because something might seem boring or tedious. So if something might seem boring or tedious to you, you don't even get started, because you don't want to deal with how boring it's going to be. Now there are a bunch of other reasons why too, but essentially, procrastination, if you can see here, it's not a lack of work ethic. It's not a lack of motivation. You don't need to push yourself harder.

Essentially, what you need to realize is that procrastination is a form of emotional avoidance. We think we're avoiding the task. But what we're actually avoiding is how that task makes us feel. So you avoid starting something because you're afraid of it, you know, you're afraid of won't be perfect, and you're afraid to fail. Again, you're not avoiding that task, you're avoiding that feeling of failure, you avoid doing something boring or tedious. Again, not because of the task, but because you don't want to feel bored, you It's boring to feel boring, why feel bored. Or for a lot of us, if you're a clinician, especially, you avoid doing things like charting, like you avoid your charts, because you already have this sense of dread associated with that. And the dread comes because you think the chart needs to be perfect, or you're gonna get judged. And it's gonna take too long for it to be perfect. And then it's gonna get so boring because it takes so long because I needed to be perfect. So now you're feeling dread.

So what did we do instead? So instead, let's say for example, you have a big project, and you have all this weight on yourself, because you want the project to be perfect. So instead of starting the project, you spent all of this time researching all the ways to get it done. All the ways to make it super perfect. And as you're researching, maybe you start noticing that there's you know, a cool thing that just popped up on social media. And now you notice that there's an ad on social media, you know, selling you something, and you go down this rabbit hole of doing online shopping.

Now, next thing you know, you're supposed to be doing this project, but your online shopping, or you let yourself get distracted by things like you know, instead of doing that project, you decide that this is the perfect time to go and answer all of your emails. So you go and answer all your emails. Or you go and try to solve some problem by talking to a colleague instead of sitting down and working on this. So those are some examples of the ways we procrastinate. Now, notice that I didn't say everything we do when we procrastinate. And the reason why is I want you to get super clear on what you do when you procrastinate. Because there's two different types of procrastination. There's something called positive procrastination, I like to refer to it as positive and something that I like to refer to as negative procrastination.

So positive procrastination are things that we do that have a positive effect anyway. Right? So it's like answering emails. Instead of, you know, doing the project we were supposed to do. It's, you know, when people go out and clean their entire house or their entire bathroom. That's a form of positive procrastination. Starting on another project, you know, organizing a shelf, if that's what you do. So there are different ways that we positively procrastinate. So I want you to just take a note now and think for yourself, like what are the things that I do to procrastinate, that still make me feel good? Like I can, like rationalize it, I'm being productive so it's okay. Again, some really common examples are cleaning or noticing doing emails starting another project.

Alright, now there's also negative procrastination. So negative procrastination is things that we do that makes us feel horrible at the end, where there is no net positive effect, there is a net negative effect. So these are things like social media, you just go and you're scrolling through social media. Next thing, you know, it's been 30 minutes and you haven't gotten anything done. Or maybe you snack, maybe you're about to start this project. And all of a sudden, you have this craving for something.

So you get up and you go grab a snack. Now you're snacking on something, you weren't even hungry, but you're doing it anyway. And here's another big one, you buffer or you procrastinate with Netflix. So this was, this is a big one for me just like watching or streaming on something, when I'm avoiding something, I'll catch myself doing that, especially at night, that's my, that's my net negative way that I procrastinate is Netflix. So I want you to come up with the ways you positively procrastinate and the ways that you negatively procrastinate. And if you need to pause this episode and do that, go for it.

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And the reason why I'm asking you to do that is because the way we're going to know that we're procrastinating is knowing what it is that we do when we procrastinate. Alright, so why don't we let's do a quick exercise right now I want you guys to do this as you're listening. Okay, I want you to think of a recent time that you procrastinate it. Think of a recent time that you procrastinated, and I want you to ask yourself, what task are you avoiding? Okay, what is it that you were avoiding?

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And now I want you to ask yourself, like, what were you thinking? And what were you feeling? Because again, we avoid something not because of the tasks because of how that task makes us feel.
And now that you know what it is that you avoid, or how you feel for a lot of us, we have trends, I always avoid something if I don't think it's going to be perfect. You know, I always avoid something if I don't think I know how to do it, or if I'm afraid to fail. Or I always avoid something that's going to cause me frustration. I always avoid something that's going to make me feel bored or tedious. So once you notice your trends, just know them, just know that that's what comes up for you having that awareness is really powerful.

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You know? Alright, so let's talk about some ways to move past this. So the number one most important thing you need to know to move past this is what you do when you procrastinate, which is why had you guys come up with those lists for yourselves. The reason why is we it's so habitual when we procrastinate that before we've even had a chance to know we're procrastinating, we're already taking the action. I mean, haven't you noticed that before you even know you're scrolling through social media, that you're avoiding a project, you're already scrolling through social media, or before you know you're avoiding a project, you've already opened up your email to answer your emails.

This is so fascinating to me. Like, I'll notice when I want to avoid something and all of a sudden, I'm like picking up my phone, and I don't even have the awareness that I'm procrastinating until I'm about to turn on Instagram. So I want you to just recognize that for yourself. Because having that awareness to that habit is going to help you break that happen.

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Okay, so you have that awareness. And I'm going to introduce to you a few concepts that I want you to use that might support you in overcoming the procrastination. Concept number one is just noting, we talk about noting a lot. So it's super simple. All you need to do is notice that you're taking an action that's causing you to procrastinate. Oh, I noticed I was about to go on Instagram, you know, to avoid this, I noticed that I'm exercising a little longer than I'm supposed to right now because I don't want to go back to that project. So notice what it is that you do and say it out loud.

You want to bring awareness to the action, because that helps you turn on your prefrontal cortex, the part of your brain that's aware of your higher order thinking instead of the habitual responsive part of your brain. So just practice by saying a notice and finish the sentence, I noticed that I was about to procrastinate. All right. Concept number two, is this concept of a minus work. All right, high achievers.

Listen, we love doing a plus work a plus plus, plus, plus, plus, that's what we want. We want to be star students all the time.

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Here's the problem. When we're trying to create a plus work with everything we have this diminishing return on the quality of our work. When you're pushing so hard to get it done. There's only so much effort that's going to give you a product. After that the amount of effort is going to give you a diminishing return on the actual quality. The amount of effort doesn't really matter. You can't really get it any better anymore. So I want you to think about instead of always shooting for a plus work, give yourself permission to create a minus one

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Why? Because 90% of the things you do do not require a plus work, they don't require perfection 90% of what you do can be good enough. Really, it's just a small little bit that requires perfection. And especially for all of you listening, those high achievers out there that are always aiming for a plus work, I guarantee you that your A minus work, even your B plus work is probably most other people's A plus work or a work.

So just know that, just know that if you were to ease off a little bit and give yourself permission to do a minus work, and get it done faster, without the stress, without that headache that you get from trying to wordsmith an email forever, or trying to like get this project just right, let me just move this period or like change this font, what you're actually doing is you're getting it done faster, putting it out there into the world faster, allowing yourself to be more helpful faster. And you're giving yourself the ability to get more stuff done, because you're not wasting time here procrastinating to make it perfect. So that's the concept of a minus work. So give yourself the permission to do a minus work.

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Now, the third thing is something that was introduced to me by one of my teachers, and it's this concept of a dread sprint. So if we go back to all of those examples of the things that we avoid, you know, when we're avoiding that project, because we're afraid that we're going to fail, or when we're avoiding doing our clinical charts, because we're afraid they're going to be tedious. When we're avoiding that we're actually having this feeling of dread bubble up inside of us, we have this dread inside. And so the concept here is a concept of a dread sprint, it's running towards the dread to just get over it. And notice that all you need to do is get over that first hump. Because how many times have you avoided something procrastinated forever, then you finally started working on it or finished it and you're like, Oh, that wasn't that bad. You guess it was okay.

Just notice, what you actually need to do is just get over that first hump. It's this block in our brains that our brains are telling us, it's going to be hard, it's going to be so hard, I'm so afraid. And all you need to do is get over that first hump, take that first step, and then it gets easier. It will feel uncomfortable when you're practicing. But then it'll get easier and easier. Because that initial discomfort what's happening is, you're starting to rewire your brain now, and make it easier for you to practice this stretch run in the future. And think about Newton's first law, an object in motion stays in motion, an object at rest stays at rest. And this concept of dread sprint is essentially getting you to get into motion, because once you're

in motion, once you take that first step, it gets easier and easier for you to do. Now, I introduced this concept to my students inside the journey, and one of my students said, Oh, wow, you know, she gives herself a timer to do a project and says, Alright, fine, I really don't want to do it. But I'm just going to try to do it for 10 minutes. And if I can do it for 10 minutes, I can stop after that. So she'll set a timer and she just starts the work. And the 10 minutes come and she can choose at that time, do I stay doing it? Or do I stop. And she often continues to do it because she got over that very first home, she ran through the dread got over that first hump and started working.

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Alright, and here's the last one, if it serves you, if it serves, you give yourself a deadline. For many of us, when we're working on certain projects, there's no by one date By when will I have that shelf organized by when will I finish XYZ, there's no by one day. And when there's no date by when you have to have it done. You allow yourself forever to take it to finish your projects, to finish organizing to finish, whatever, why? I'm going to introduce you to Parkinson's Law. I didn't create this. But Parkinson's Law essentially says the work is going to expand to feel fill the time available for its completion. So if you give yourself a week to do something that would have taken you 20 minutes, it's going to it's going to take a week. So I want you to think about all those concepts again. And I'm just going to sort of summarize everything we've covered.

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Number one, the main reasons why we procrastinate, especially as high achievers is because we're afraid to fail. We think everything needs to be perfect, or we don't want to be bored doing it.

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And again, procrastination is a form of emotional avoidance. Procrastination is a form of emotional avoidance. We're not avoiding the task necessarily. We're avoiding how that task makes us feel.

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And we take certain actions all the time or we procrastinate. We take habitual actions we we have we procrastinate positively by doing things like answering emails, exercising, cleaning, organizing, or we procrastinate negatively doing things that has known no net positive effect but has a net negative effect. Like

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snacking on things you wouldn't have normally eaten going on social media or watching a bunch of stuff on Netflix.

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Instead, what you want to do is you want to notice what you do when you start to procrastinate. So you can call it out and note it in the moment. Then you want to give yourself permission to do a minus work. Practice the concept of a minus work.

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Practice the concept of sprinting towards the dread, Dread sprint, so that you can get yourself in motion because that's the hardest part. And remember, if it serves you set a deadline so that the work does not continue to expand to fill the time available. Give yourself a deadline to get it done. All right, sweet friends. I hope you enjoyed that episode. I will see you next week.

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Hey 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 VanessaCalderonmd.com/join. I'll see you there.