



## This issue...

**Procrastination...** ¡Mañana Resultará Peor! (Spanish), Tomorrow it will be worse! (English)

## Want to share your story?

Do you have a story that you would like to share? A life experience you want to talk about? I want to hear! I'm looking for life stories – sad, funny or just food for thought. So many people are isolated from others and don't realize that their stories are the stories of many others. I believe that both telling and hearing stories can be very healing.

## Want to receive these by email?

Simply send an email to Cindy Trevitt at [cindy@mycounsellor.ca](mailto:cindy@mycounsellor.ca) and write "subscribe" in the subject line.

## Want to hear about a certain topic?

Email your suggestions or questions – I'd love to hear from you.



## New hours

**Now open Tuesdays through Saturdays!**



**Cindy Trevitt, Registered Professional Counsellor**

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Web page [www.mycounsellor.ca](http://www.mycounsellor.ca)

Member in good standing of the Canadian Professional Counsellor's Association: [www.cPCA-rpc.ca](http://www.cPCA-rpc.ca)

## Furthermore:

This month, a little something different! You will need access to sound on your computer – there's a short video called - *Tales of Mere Existence "Procrastination"* – on Youtube.com which can be found at this link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4P785j15Tzk>

A book recommendation (I have not read but have heard good things):

The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles, by Steven Pressfield

By Cindy Trevitt, Registered Professional Counsellor

**Nothing is so fatiguing as the eternal hanging on of an uncompleted task. ~William James**

Most of us know that procrastination is putting off some task or avoiding taking some action until a later time. To dilly-dally, stall or drag one's feet. Some call it sheer laziness. It is also seen as something people do to cope with or avoid anxious feelings associated with a task or perceived possible consequences. 'If I don't do this, then I won't get rejected'. Or worse, 'if I don't do everything on my to-do list, then I won't have to face the even bigger problem of the emptiness of my life'.

**Procrastination is most definitely a burden.**

Things that are not done can take more energy than things that are. You know how you feel when everyday you face the same list of things to do, the same reminders, the same messy closet, garage, or life. It's frustrating, exhausting, overwhelming, inconvenient, irritating, and nagging. We may feel guilty, stressed, or unproductive. We may experience the dissatisfaction and disapproval of others for not meeting our responsibilities and commitments. Whereas when you have completed something there can be a rich, rewarding satisfaction plus a sense of relief and release - sometimes even newfound motivation to move on to other things.



**A year from now you may wish you had started today –  
Karen Lamb**

Now, some procrastination is normal and healthy. Where it becomes a problem is when it begins to impede with our lives. Basically, if it is affecting your work, your relationships or your life, then it's a problem. Conversely I would say that some who procrastinates can have a healthy value system. For example, someone who never cleans their apartment but instead spends their time developing their business; having fun and nurturing significant relationships could be seen to be living life fully. I remember a comment from a friend years ago: "I've made a decision. From now on, I'm not folding my underwear when I put it away." Simple and silly but sage advice.

It's an interesting fact that **perfectionists** are one of the best (or worst) types of procrastinators. They frequently set out goals that are impossible to achieve and then feel like failures. Alternatively, they deliberately postpone things to avoid what they see as their inevitable failure. At least that way, they fail on their own terms rather than waiting for the axe to fall – they have a false sense of control. Often perfectionists have excruciatingly high standards for themselves – frequently unattainable. Somewhere in life they learned that people value them based on what they accomplished – good grades in school; captain of the team; and so on – rather than simply on the merit of being themselves. So, that so-called slothful person could actually be suffering from perfectionism, not laziness at all!

Some live their lives based on **wishful thinking** rather than on reality and realizing their true potential. They may fantasize and have all kinds of ideas – great ones – but they don't take actual steps to realize them. Often the ideas are so grandiose that they are unachievable. Having dreams is important – don't let them go. But ask yourself if they are realistic? What *would* be realistic?

**When there is a hill to climb, don't think that waiting  
will make it smaller - Anonymous**

Others may have **low self-worth** and a self-defeating mentality. "There's no point in trying." "I'll just lose." "No one will care or appreciate me or what I've done." "Only other people can do these things." And so on. And in this case, of course, it's not so much the procrastination that's the problem, it's the low self-worth. That can be addressed. There are tons of self help books, counsellors, life coaches and other types of help available. If nothing else, ask yourself if you have some belief that's holding you back. What is it? Is there any basis in reality to support this belief as always being true? Does this belief encourage personal growth, emotional maturity, independence of thinking and action, and stable mental health? What would be an

appropriate, realistic belief you could substitute for this irrational belief?

Then there are such considerations as the importance of the tasks being put off. Something like organizing the 'junk drawer' in the kitchen could reasonably be said to be of low importance. Really, in the grand scheme of your life, how important is this? If you're working on an epic novel, then mostly definitely, please *do* disregard the junk drawer. Then there are things like being in a job you hate, putting off looking for work elsewhere and making up the usual associated excuses – another procrastinator trademark that is intended to justify the procrastination – such as: "It's too hard"; "I'm too tired"; "There are no jobs"; "I'm too old"; etc. etc. It's important to weigh the significance of the task. Is it impacting your life? Is it deeply meaningful to you? If you're ninety-six years old and looking back on your life, what will you wish you had done? You probably won't remember the junk drawer, but the job....?

**He who hesitates is last. – Mae West**

There are those who may confuse or blur the lines between procrastination and **being impulsive**. They do what they feel like doing in a moment rather than actually considering all the possibilities and plotting out a game plan that might work best for them. I don't know how many times I've sat down to do some homework only to decide that first I need to look out the window and investigate that barking dog noise or return a phone call or read my email!

**Unpleasant chores** are deterrents – we all experience that. Are the consequences worth it?

Then there's the **intensity** of doing something that is outright gratifying. Even *that* can be a deterrent. The feelings are so strong that you can only do this thing for a minute. You may need to repeatedly work at exposing yourself to this feeling so that over time, it may become easier to freely enjoy this activity.

**Big projects** have an overwhelming sense to them. There's no immediate, foreseeable reward coming your way. You don't know if you're going



to be able to do this. What if it's a complete waste of time? Most big projects do reap *some* reward.

Then there's the classic, "I want to do it, but **there must be an easier way**. Let me think of one". While it's fine to think of better ways, if that becomes a stop sign every time, then it's just procrastinating.

**Anger** can also bring out resistance – you don't want to be controlled! You may need to learn to assert yourself, state your feelings, say no or yes outright. But look at the results for you. Are they what you want for your self?

Procrastination can also be born of **disorganization** or **forgetfulness**. Consider seeking an organizational professional or self-help materials – there's lots on the internet.

**Fear!** Fear you might have to *show up* in life if it works. Fear of loss of control. One thing I often tell my clients is, '**Don't let fear make your decisions for you**'.

Maybe, deep in your heart, you truly love the simple life and maybe you think the world is driving you to think you *should* be doing things but you're actually not *because you don't want to!* That's okay!

Perhaps you're waiting for the right sized block of time to show up simultaneously with the perfect mood and the best weather and the right day and having a certain amount of sleep and inspiration has dawned on you and Mars is rising over your sign and your blood sugar has stabilized and the room temperature is conducive to fast typing speeds and your relationship is stable and the cat has just been checked out by the vet (and is in good health) and the car has reached exactly 100,000 km's (and you don't want it to go over) and there's nothing that you want to watch on TV and.....

**Priorities are not written in granite. They need to be flexible and change as we do...It takes peace of mind and clarity to recognize and reorder meaningful, personal priorities. Maybe that is why so many of us procrastinate. - Sarah Ban Breathnach**

In more severe cases, it can be a situation where an individual is highly depressed, has an attention deficit disorder or an addiction that is consuming their life and they are neglecting

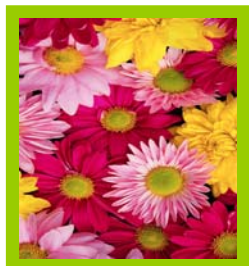
things as a result of the addiction. In these cases, professional help is highly recommended.

### How to stop procrastinating

- ⊗ Understand why you procrastinate, and then develop strategies to fix it. Be self aware. If you don't know, this need not be a dead end. Dig deeper.
- ⊗ **Make it easy** to give yourself permission to do things.
- ⊗ Create a sense of security for yourself towards achieving things. Instead of walking 30,000 feet in the air on a tightrope, try 3 feet above the ground.
- ⊗ Break large jobs into smaller, more manageable tasks.

**You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step. – Martin Luther King, Jr.**

- ⊗ Plan and complete a start-up task, no matter how small.
- ⊗ Determine a time for making a decision and the criteria for making it. Share your deadline with someone else.
- ⊗ Develop a clear mental picture of the completed task and how you will feel at that time. Maintain a focus on the end result, not just the process. Remind yourself how good you'll feel when you're finished.
- ⊗ **Reward yourself** for accomplishments.
- ⊗ Schedule the task for when you will be at your peak.
- ⊗ Work in small blocks of time instead of in long stretches.
- ⊗ Practice the three D's: Do it. Dump it. Delegate it.
- ⊗ Hire someone; get a life coach; ask a friend for help.
- ⊗ Keep your high standards, but see that sometimes 80% for you may well be 100% for someone else.
- ⊗ Don't spend hours conducting a detailed cost breakdown when a rough estimate would suffice.
- ⊗ Create a to-do list with priorities. Make sure the items on that list are significant. Don't make up 'busywork' so you can feel as if you are being productive.



### ⊗ Is the task meaningful to you?

- ⊗ Eliminate tasks you don't intend to do.
- ⊗ Allow yourself to make wrong decisions.
- ⊗ Give yourself permission to change your mind.
- ⊗ Remember that *some day, maybe* is not the same as *to do*.
- ⊗ Have practice runs. Make rough drafts.
- ⊗ **Be realistic.** Don't set up a time frame or a list of tasks that will be difficult or impossible to achieve.
- ⊗ Eliminate distractions or move to a place where you can concentrate. Turn off the television, the phone, the radio and anything else that might keep you from your task.
- ⊗ "If you start your morning out by eating a frog, the rest of the day is almost surely going to get better than it started." Meaning, sometimes it's helpful to do the hardest things first to get them out of the way, feel good about yourself and then move on to others.

### ⊗ Remember that progress, not perfection, is your goal.

- ⊗ Find out what your options are.
- ⊗ It takes time to build new habits – and that amount of time is different for everyone. Think of habits like you would hike on trails in a forest. The more those trails are used, the clearer they are, and the easier they are to use. As trails are used less, they become overgrown and stop being useful. **Change is a process not an event.**
- ⊗ Don't let others define your success or your values. You decide.
- ⊗ Do take care of yourself: get enough sleep; eat right; exercise; play often; tend to any emotional things eating you up – any or all of these neglected can reduce your energy and of course your desire to do anything.

Even if there's nothing on this list that helps you, try *something* that works for you. Have you done something in the past that has worked for you? Can you try that now?

Know this: *even the best and the brightest procrastinate.* **Let bliss be the thing that compels you, not your to-do list.**