

## EAP Newsletter – June 2024

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### Keys to Overcoming Procrastination

It's 5 p.m. and everyone's leaving work -- except you, because you still must do the weekly sales report. You knew the deadline but waited too long to get started. Why do you put off doing things until the last minute?

"Many people don't realize procrastination is an automatic habit pattern they use to avoid tension," says William Knaus, Ed.D., a psychologist and author of "The Procrastination Workbook." "It's kicked off by some form of discomfort, such as feeling uncertain or insecure about something. These habit patterns are the barriers to overcoming procrastination."

Dr. Knaus divides these patterns into the following three diversions.

#### Mental diversions

If you think, "I can't do it right now because I'm too tired. I'm not alert enough. I won't be able to concentrate well enough. I'll get to it later when I'm better prepared to think more clearly," then you've fallen into a procrastination trap known as the Manana Diversion. You've fooled yourself into thinking later is different from now, and that later will be better.

#### Action diversions

With this barrier, you procrastinate by going to the water cooler, doodling, calling someone on the phone or doing something else on your computer.



## Emotional diversions

Some office tasks aren't inspiring or motivating -- they're drudgery. If you wait to be inspired to do something you consider a drag, you'll be waiting a long time.

To overcome these barriers, Dr. Knaus recommends the following steps.

### Five-minute system

Commit to the task for five minutes. For example, tell yourself, "I'll work for the next five minutes on gathering the information for developing this report."

At the end of that five minutes, decide whether you'll commit for another five. Continue this pattern until you complete the task, run out of time or have a good reason to stop.

"By doing the task for at least five minutes, you're already living through the frustrations that are a part of the activity, and you're making a series of forward-moving decisions," says Dr. Knaus.

### Plan in reverse

Many people set goals but don't have a plan. To create a clear, directed and purposeful plan:

First, visualize your goal as a target and imagine shooting an arrow into the target's center. Imagine the arrow's trajectory as you pull it back, release and hit the center.

In other words, visualize your outcome first, then work back from there. Where do you want to end up? What do you do just before that, and before that? By doing this, you're automatically creating a plan at the same time you're reminding yourself the plan is a series of small parts.

### Building frustration tolerance

If you can develop a high frustration tolerance, you'll achieve more in life because fewer things will burden your mind. By persistently tackling challenging tasks until you complete them, you build frustration tolerance.

"Even if you don't overcome the discomfort, you've lived through the frustration, which creates this powerful message: You can organize and direct your activities for a productive result, and you do have control over yourself," says Dr. Knaus. "It's better to recognize that doing reasonable things, in a reasonable way, within a reasonable time, gets things done -- and you end up doing rather than stewing."

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# Embracing Change

Change is a natural part of life and can be an opportunity to learn, grow, and build your character. However, change of any kind can be difficult to navigate and adjust to, whether you view it as positive or negative. Here are some suggestions for managing and embracing changes when they occur.

## Manage Your Expectations

Sometimes the anticipation you experience before a big change occurs can cause more stress and anxiety than the change itself. Find ways to cope with the upcoming change in order to lessen your stress levels. Find someone to talk to about your feelings regarding the change, such as a trusted friend, family member, or counselor.

## Radical Acceptance

First coined by psychologist Marsha Linehan, radical acceptance involves the practice of fully accepting reality as it is and acknowledging there are some things you cannot control—especially when things don't turn out the way you wanted or expected. Fighting or resisting change often makes it more painful than it otherwise would be. It doesn't mean that you are helpless to change things in the future but that you accept the present moment as it is.

## Transitions Are Temporary

Keep in mind that the beginning of a transitional period is often the most difficult, and the adjustment period gets easier with each day. Try to take it one day at a time and keep channels of communication open with others who are also involved in the change. Remember that how you feel now regarding the change is temporary and you will adjust in time.

## Find Positive Aspects

If change often causes you worry and fear, look for possible positive outcomes of the change. For instance, there could be new opportunities that enrich your life and connect you with new people. Also, change will often help you grow and learn about yourself. What at first may be considered a problem, could turn into a beneficial opportunity.

## Build Your Resilience

Resilience is defined as the ability to adapt to difficult situations and come out stronger. Resilient people find ways to cope with adversity and overcome setbacks by utilizing their skills and resources. Think of change as an opportunity to strengthen your resiliency.