

# PREVENT PROCRASTINATION WORKBOOK

FOR ALL THOSE WHO PROCRASTINATE



*by Nicole Humridge*



*Welcome*

# TO YOUR WORKBOOK

To an extent, everyone engages in procrastination. Who hasn't switched on the TV or scrolled through their phone instead of finishing up that presentation for work or starting on your course homework? There is a difference, however, between those who procrastinate occasionally with certain tasks and those who are chronic procrastinators. Wherever you fall on the spectrum, you may find these tips help you to be more productive and tick those things off the To-Do list that never seem to budge.

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A brief introduction as to what is chronic procrastination and why it can impede your ability to function in your daily life.

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## JOURNAL PROMPTS

Here are a list of questions to truly sit back and reflect on. By thinking about your honest answers, you will gain insight into the root cause of your procrastination.

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## STRATEGIES

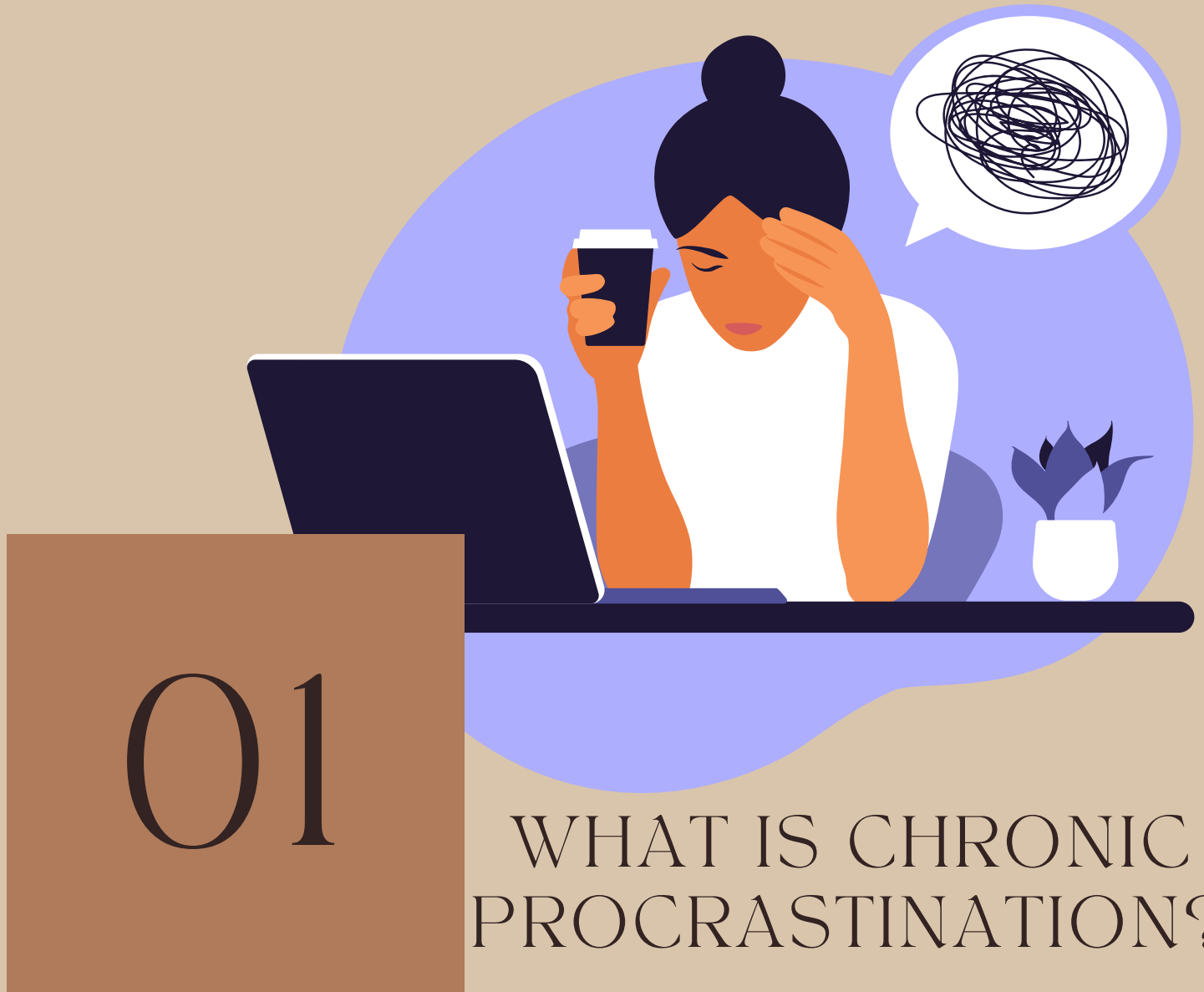
There are many different tips and tricks you can implement in your daily life to help you initiate tasks and prevent procrastination.

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## CONCLUSION

Here is your space to reflect and tie everything together.





## WHAT IS CHRONIC PROCRASTINATION?

Chronic procrastination involves consistently delaying to initiate tasks leading to feelings of guilt, stress and overwhelm. This has to be a regular theme in your life and lead to feelings of impairment for it to be considered "chronic." On the outset, chronic procrastination may look like a time management problem.

The person just can't prioritize and manage their time effectively. However, research shows that time management isn't the real issue. Instead of viewing chronic procrastination as a time management problem, it is much more accurate to view it as an emotional dysregulation issue.

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Chronic procrastinators may have a heightened nervous system whereby when confronted with a potential stressor, the fight or flight response is activated. When in this situation, they may be more likely to opt for flight. This leads to avoidance behavior. While it may relieve the stress in the moment, as all procrastinators, chronic or otherwise know, it doesn't relieve it the future. Rather it amplifies it. Moreover, many chronic procrastinators score high on

perfectionism traits. Therefore, the reason they may procrastinate could be due to their innate fear of failure and their need for everything to be absolutely perfect, down to the last detail. Since perfection is rarely achievable or requires immense effort to achieve, they may feel overwhelmed before even beginning the task. Thus, it is easier to not begin at all.

# COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

## 1

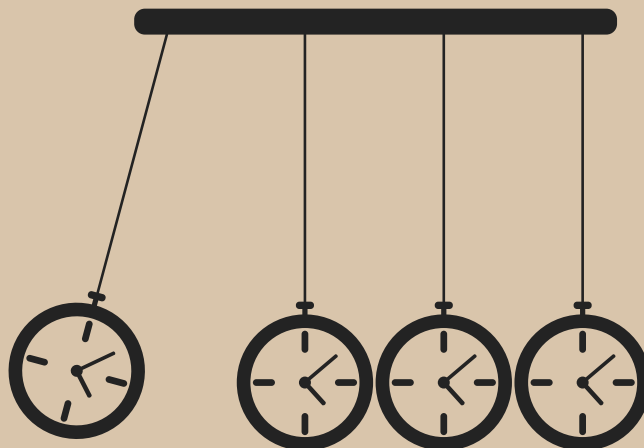
Overestimating the amount of time to complete a task is a common one. Procrastinators may think they have a full month before a project is due therefore it is easy to put off. That month turns into a fortnight. Still plenty of time. Then it's just a week; that's still ok. Until suddenly, the project is due the next day and the person still hasn't started it.

## 2

Overestimating the future motivation to complete a task or waiting for "the right moment." Typically, there is never going to be a right or perfect moment to do something. Also levels of motivation in a person stay relatively consistent over time. Certain tasks may be more or less aversive, but the person's motivation usually stays the same.

## 3

Underestimating the length of time a project will take. Procrastinators may put off starting the task because they think that the task itself will be over and done with quickly; therefore, they can leave it until the last minute. However, it may come as a surprise that the task takes much longer than anticipated, leaving the individual scrambling at the last minute.



# JOURNAL PROMPTS

# 02

In order to understand why you procrastinate it is crucial to get to the root cause. While you may initially think it is a time management issue, upon reflection you may see that certain feelings consistently arise when confronted with initiating tasks. In order to prevent procrastination, you can try to work through these feelings in order to enter a calmer headspace where you are more emotionally prepared to tackle the tasks ahead. Take a look at the following journal prompts and answer as honestly as possible.



# JOURNAL PROMPTS

WHAT FEELINGS ARISE WHEN CONFRONTED WITH THE PROSPECT OF HAVING TO COMPLETE A TASK BY A DEADLINE? SOME TASKS TO VISUALISE INCLUDE STUDYING FOR AN EXAM, SUBMITTING A JOB APPLICATION, PAYING YOUR BILLS, BIRTHDAY SHOPPING ETC.



WHY DO YOU FEEL THIS WAY? ARE THERE SOME LIMITING BELIEFS AT PLAY?





# JOURNAL PROMPTS

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE IDEA OF COMPLETING SOMETHING THAT IS LESS THAN “PERFECT”?



DO YOU FEEL BURNT-OUT AND EMOTIONALLY DRAINED BEFORE EVEN STARTING THE TASK NECESSARY TO COMPLETE?



# JOURNAL PROMPTS

WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS AROUND THE WORD "PRODUCTIVE"? ARE THEY NEGATIVE, STRESS-RELATED OR AVERSIVE?



WHAT HAPPENED IN YOUR LEARNING HISTORY/PAST THAT HAS CONDITIONED YOU TO FEEL THIS WAY ABOUT 'BEING PRODUCTIVE' AND CONSTANTLY 'DOING'?




# JOURNAL PROMPTS

DO YOU HOLD YOURSELF TO A HIGHER STANDARD THAN YOU WOULD HOLD FRIENDS, PEERS OR COLLEAGUES?

A blank, lined page from a notebook, intended for writing a response to the first journal prompt. The page is white with light blue horizontal ruling and a vertical red margin line on the left side. The page is slightly aged and has some faint smudges.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO FEEL VALIDATED, WORTHY AND ACCOMPLISHED?

A blank, lined page from a notebook, intended for writing a response to the second journal prompt. The page is white with light blue horizontal ruling and a vertical red margin line on the left side. The page is slightly aged and has some faint smudges.

# JOURNAL PROMPTS

TAP INTO SOME FEAR THEMES THAT HAVE CONTROLLED YOUR LIFE TO AN EXTENT UP UNTIL THIS POINT? FOR EXAMPLE, THIS COULD BE IN THE FORM OF 'WHAT IF SCENARIOS.'

- WHAT IF I FINISH THIS PROJECT AND IT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH?
- WHAT IF I START MY ONLINE BUSINESS AND GET NO INTERACTION?
- WHAT IF I WRITE AND PUBLISH MY BOOK AND NO ONE BUYS IT?
- WHAT IF I BUY A BIRTHDAY PRESENT AND THE PERSON DOES NOT LIKE IT?
- WHAT IF I PAINT A PICTURE AND SOMEONE CRITICIZES IT?
- WHAT IF I SUBMIT THAT JOB APPLICATION AND GET A STANDARD REJECTION?
- ETC.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THAT "WHAT IF" SCENARIO CAME TRUE? HOW WOULD YOU FEEL? WOULD THE WORLD END OR WOULD YOU PICK YOURSELF UP AND KEEP GOING?



# JOURNAL PROMPTS

WHAT KIND OF OUTCOME DO YOU PROJECT TO HAPPEN ONCE A TASK IS COMPLETED? DO YOU TYPICALLY PROJECT POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE OUTCOMES?



ARE YOUR OUTCOMES ACTUALLY LIKELY TO HAPPEN OR IS IT YOU BEING YOUR OWN WORST CRITIC?





# JOURNAL PROMPTS

HOW DO YOU PROCESS AND MANAGE STRESS? DO YOU TEND TO TACKLE THE STRESSOR HEAD ON OR IMMERSE YOURSELF IN DISTRACTIONS TO AVOID IT? OR PERHAPS YOU ENGAGE IN A MIX OF THE TWO?



WHAT IS STOPPING YOU FROM DOING THE TASK IN THE PRESENT MOMENT? ARE THESE ACTIVITIES ACTUALLY NECESSARY TO GET DONE NOW?



# JOURNAL PROMPTS

WHEN YOU PROJECT INTO THE FUTURE, DO YOU ENVISION MORE POSITIVE INTERACTIONS AND OCCURRENCES IN YOUR LIFE OR MORE NEGATIVE ONES?



WHAT WOULD YOUR FUTURE SELF SAY TO YOUR CURRENT SELF? WOULD S/HE SPEAK IN A KINDLY WAY OR IN A HARSH ONE? IS THE VOICE OF YOUR FUTURE SELF SIMILAR TO THE VOICE OF YOUR CURRENT INNER DIALOGUE? WHAT'S DIFFERENT? WHAT'S SIMILAR?





# 03

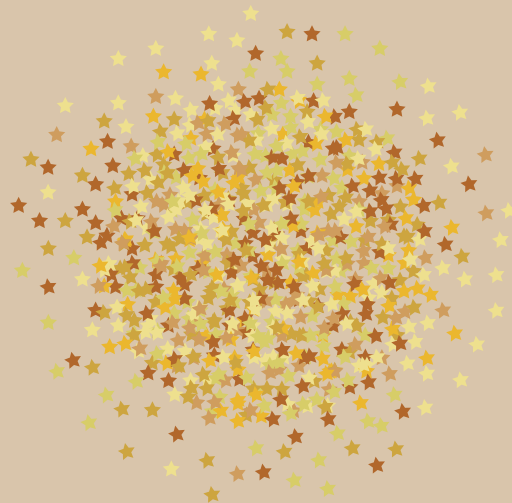
## STRATEGIES

Hopefully working through the journal prompts gave you some insight into the real reasons behind your procrastination habits. Now you understand what is going on within, it is time to modify your environment and external situation to help support you in initiating tasks and moving forward in your life. The upcoming pages will outline some strategies that you can implement in your day-to-day life to help prevent procrastination.

Give them a go whenever you feel that urge to put something off or switch on Netflix to avoid uncomfortable emotions. Keep this workbook somewhere visible to hold you accountable and act as a support and a reminder that you can do this. You can get whatever it is done and show up for your life in the best possible ways!

# PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

- Cue - Trigger - Reward
  - CUE: Set up cues in your environment that act as visual reminders to complete a certain task. This could be in the form of:
    - Phone calendar alerts
    - Paper calendar on the wall
    - Notes on the fridge
    - Writing on a dry-erase board
    - Pins on a bulletin board
    - etc.
  - TRIGGER: These are a set of action steps whereby each step triggers action towards the next step. It helps to break down tasks into small, manageable chunks. As a personal example, I had to complete an online training not long ago. It was a training I did not want to do so I had been putting off doing it for... A YEAR! It is due mid 2022 but still. That is a long time to procrastinate. So, I finally put my head to it and broke it down into manageable chunks:
    1. Day 1: Type URL into browser (literally that was it!! NOTHING else)
    2. Day 2: Type in log-in credentials and open training
    3. Day 3: Complete Part 1 of training
    4. Day 4: Complete Part 2 of training
    5. Day 5: Complete Part 3 of training (final part - yay!)
    6. Reward self!
    - I had to start small in order to get into the momentum of completing the overall task. By starting with something so small and easy, it was nearly impossible to find an excuse not to do it.
  - REWARD: as you can see in step 6, reward is mentioned. It is so important to have something lined up for yourself to show acknowledgement and appreciation for yourself for completing the task. It's great to be able to add in a bonus layer of motivation so that not only finishing the task will be rewarding for you but so will getting that extra little something that you have set aside for yourself to celebrate the wonderful work you have done!



# PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

- Nervous System Regulation

- It is so important to deactivate that fight or flight response which spikes adrenaline when confronted with a task, deadline or potential stressor. The best way to gain control over that fight or flight response is to regulate your nervous system. You can do so by trying some of the below activities:
  - Deep breathing to relax both your mind and body
  - A calming yoga routine to shift some of that nervous energy
  - Guided meditation to clear your mind of unwanted thoughts
  - Going for a brief walk to change up the scenery and refresh you
  - Having a healthy snack to feel nourished
  - Drinking an energizing or warm beverage to give you that extra oomph of energy or to soothe you (coffee is *always* my go to but I know that doesn't work for everyone)
- It is important to engage in a calming activity WITHOUT feeling guilty or feeling unproductive because you are not engaging in the task at hand. By regulating your nervous system you are setting yourself up for success. It is vital that you view your chosen activity as a necessary part of the process. It is part of the task at hand. Once you are able to shift your perspective, the guilt shifts with it!
- It is also important to note that scrolling through social media feeds or binge watching a Netflix series do NOT regulate the nervous system. They activate totally different parts of our bodies and brains and should not be our chosen activities (if regulating the nervous system is the goal). The intention is to feel calm, centered and balanced. There is plenty of research out there which shows that social media in particular makes us feel just the opposite.





# PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

- **Write To-Do lists with deadlines**
  - You can even include mini deadlines. If you're breaking your task down into small chunks, include deadlines for each part.
- **Shift your mind-set when you recognize that you are procrastinating**
  - Changing your thought patterns is certainly easier said than done, but simply reframing certain thoughts can have powerful effects. For instance, instead of thinking 'there's no time to get this done. I have so much to do for this project,' try thinking, 'All I need to do is start with x and take it from there.' Once you realize the hardest part of getting any task done is simply starting it, everything will flow more easily.
- **REST when you need to**
  - It is vital not to overstretch yourself. You may find you are procrastinating when in fact you just need a break! It's important to honor that need. Procrastination may be a signal from your mind and body that it is actually time to rest, not get things done.
- **Make realistic goals for yourself**
  - Try using the SMART approach when setting goals for yourself. That is make sure they are: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Once you develop goals that are aligned with these concepts, they should be easier to plan for and achieve.
- **Minimize distractions**
  - Setting up your physical space is crucial when trying to prevent procrastination from taking over. You can try: putting your phone away/turning it off, avoid having multiple tabs open on your laptop, work in a room without a TV, tell your friends/family not to disturb you for 10-15 minutes (or however long you need).
  - It's also important to create an aesthetically pleasing work environment so that you feel motivated to sit at your desk and finish those emails. Your surroundings should be inviting and welcoming to you. Try printing out some of the pictures you've saved on your Pinterest board and make a collage above your desk. Put out fresh flowers. Ensure your desk is clean and organized. There are plenty of free expert tips on home decorating - check these out and see if you can refresh your working/home space.
- **Talk to someone - get an accountability partner**
  - If you're feeling demotivated to begin a task, tell someone about it. Talk to a friend first just for support but later perhaps for them to hold you accountable. It is very difficult holding ourselves accountable and finding that intrinsic motivation to complete an aversive task. Since self-monitoring can be so hard, especially initially, don't do it! Talk to a good friend or family member and see if they will help push you through that initial resistance you feel.
- **Find meaning in the tasks**
  - It can be helpful to find something meaningful or enjoyable in the process of doing the task, as opposed to just thinking about the outcome/finished product. If you are only focused on the outcome, you may feel more overwhelmed before even starting the task. However, if you can find some joy in the process, you may be more likely to start.
- **Break down the timeframes**
  - Instead of thinking you have 1 month to finish something, break that down into 30 days. According to research, this helps us think of the future in more urgent terms.

# 04

# CONCLUSION

Here is your space to reflect. Did you learn something new about yourself or your process? What tangible changes will you make? How will you shift your mindset if you feel you are spiraling down a procrastination rabbit hole? Take some time to reflect and write it all out here.



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I hope this workbook helped you to develop a deeper understanding as to why you may procrastinate certain tasks as well as tips on how to increase productivity in a mindful way. More than that, I hope it encouraged you to cultivate self-compassion. Sometimes you are not procrastinating when putting off a task. Sometimes you genuinely need to rest. And that's OK.

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