



## Fighting Procrastination

From Jones Loflin-The Speaker With TWO Last Names



*When procrastinating, the lesser important task is more enjoyable than the more important one.*

*A clue that you're procrastinating: Waiting for just the "right moment" to work on a task.*

September 6 of each year is officially **National Fight Procrastination Day** (I'll stop here for a moment so the jokes can begin).

Procrastination, simply put, is putting something of greater importance off and instead working on something of lesser importance. The lesser important activity usually requires less energy (mental or physical), and is more enjoyable than the more important task.

Unfortunately, procrastination has much deeper consequences than a few bad jokes. I find that when I am physically procrastinating about something it still occupies my mental real estate, and keeps nagging me until I take care of it. A [recent article](#) in *Time* even states that, "Chronic procrastination is linked to poorer health, work, and relationship outcomes."

Whether your level of procrastination is high or low, there's no question that any steps we could take to reduce its presence in our work and life would be beneficial. Here are three key strategies to fight procrastination on September 6<sup>th</sup> and beyond:

### Identify when you are procrastinating

Mind Tools has a quick [self-test](#) to determine if you are a procrastinator. Any of the following activities might also need to be acknowledged for what they are...procrastinating:

- Beginning work on a high priority task, and then checking email for no constructive reason
- Only listing items on your task list that are easy and obvious
- Waiting for just the "right moment" to work on a task
- Spending too much time on tasks of low importance
- Allowing almost any interruption to take you away from a high priority task

And the biggest tell-tale sign to me that I am procrastinating: While I am engaged on these low priority tasks, my mind keeps saying, "Why



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aren't you \_\_\_\_\_?" (Insert higher priority task in the blank)

## Determine why you are procrastinating

I used to think that fear was the only reason that I chose to procrastinate. Fear that the task would not be done perfectly. Fear that it would fail and I would face the scorn of those around me. Fear that it would require me to have an unpleasant conversation. I have since learned that there are numerous other reasons we procrastinate, including:

- Seeing the task as overwhelming
- Overconfidence (I believe that I can do it quickly, so why do it now?)
- Being uncomfortable (i.e. having to think too much or get more organized)
- Feeling like a situation is hopeless
- Current physical or mental condition (I am too tired, hungry, angry, or sleepy)

*I never thought of overconfidence as a cause of procrastination.*

## Choose behaviors that subdue the urge to procrastinate

Depending on why you are procrastinating, there are specific strategies you can enact to overcome your urge to procrastinate. Here are a few universally-applicable ideas:

**Work on the task for 10 minutes.** It's such a small portion of time that your brain won't try to derail you. After the 10 minutes are up, review your progress and strive to give it another 10 minutes today or tomorrow. And take a moment to enjoy the sense of satisfaction you got from engaging in the task.

**Tell someone else what you're working on.** Be specific about the task, the outcomes, and when you plan on working on it. Nothing gets us moving like knowing that a person we trust and admire will ask us about our work later.



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*If your reward for working on a task that you've been procrastinating on includes someone else... that makes the urge to get moving even stronger.*

Focus on the most negative consequences of not finishing the task. We have a greater propensity toward losing something than gaining something so thinking of the negative consequences can often jumpstart our work.

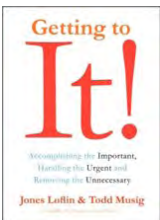
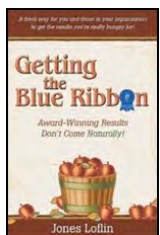
**Build in unique rewards for working on the task.** Make the reward something that you have denied yourself for quite some time. Try to think of an experience like watching a favorite movie or enjoying an unusual dessert-not just buying something for yourself. And if the reward includes someone else, that makes the urge to get moving even stronger.

**Read Linchpin by Seth Godin.** While the core subject is not procrastination, Godin gives a fresh look at the need to focus on our highest priorities, and the havoc it can wreak on our professional future when we don't.

If you need one final reminder of the pain of procrastination, remember the words of Dr. Sebastian Bailey, author and cofounder of the [Mind Gym](#). He writes, "*Procrastination is the silent killer of dreams.*" What dreams, small and large, are you suffocating by a consistent willingness to delay working on that which is most important? Maybe September 6<sup>th</sup> is an important day after all.

*How is my procrastination stifling my dreams?*

Learn more at [www.jonesloflin.com](http://www.jonesloflin.com)



Jones Loflin is an internationally-recognized author and speaker. His messages focus on change, motivation, time management and work/life blend. He is the author of three books, including *Juggling Elephants* and *Getting the Blue Ribbon*. Jones' new book, *Getting to It*, is now available wherever books are sold. His humor, energy and audience engagement make an **impact** on every member of your group, not just an impression.