



A Brain Breakthrough Masterclass

Procrastination: Your Brain is Blocking your Success

Questions & Answers from the Sessions

SMART Goals & Concrete thinking

Concrete thinking and small steps absolutely ties into the usage of SMART goals but slightly different in that the focus is more on what, when, how long, until when.

Example Completing a tax return

Identify exactly what you want to achieve

Step 1 – gathering all information regarding income so it is in one place

When will you do it - Friday 10am

How long for - 20 minutes

When finish - Friday 10.20am

The finish time is important to help stop doing that task when you have chosen to and move on to another task

This then helps it become a “concrete” intention rather than a vague

“I will start to do my tax return on Friday”

Strategies for getting into flow



The state of flow is where we can be engaged and productive and fully immersed in the task.

Remind yourself of the ultimate goal or vision – e.g. writing a book and attach identify to it – I am an author.

Give yourself as much autonomy and mastery as possible – choose what you will do, why, when and how.

Know what your reward will be.

Think about your energy zones and when would be the best time for you to do this task.

Be clear what your immediate goal is for this session and what you want to achieve – write it down and keep it visible.

This helps create clarity and keeps your brain focused.

Adapt your environment as much as possible to block out any distractions – block social media etc so you cannot use them for the set time, remove any clutter or other things that may cause distraction.

Let people know that you are not available during this time so will not be answering calls, texts, email etc.

Make it as attractive as possible so you feel comfortable and at ease – maybe music for focus, lights on, candles etc.

Have a starting ritual or an If .. then ... plan so you know that .. e.g.:

If you have your cup of tea, and the blue writing book you use to put your thoughts in then you are going to write

Have an alarm set to stop at the time you have chosen but put it away from you so you have to get up to turn it off!

Giving yourself permission to spend this time.

Knowing exactly what you would like to do.



Making it meaningful to you – a step towards your ultimate goal.

Removing as many distractions as possible.

Reflect and recognise achievements.

Does time blocking work to get things done?

Time blocking is great for helping keep interruptions and distractions to a minimum – each time we get interrupted or switch tasks it can take up to 15 minutes to regain our productivity.

It is useful to create clarity and helps keep cognitive decisions to a minimum – so you don't have to decide what you are going to do today – you have already decided.

Try to link the time blocking tasks with your energy zones

Let people know what times you will and will not be available

Set breaks and use your optimisers to keep energy levels high

Why does thinking about your roles in society help procrastination?

Take a moment to think about the different “hats” you wear in society helps you to think about the different roles and functions you undertake. This recognition helps boost your self-esteem, confidence and reminds you of the strengths you use, so boosting dopamine and creativity which in turn helps create motivation.

Why did students forgiving themselves help them procrastinate less?

Procrastination is a type of self-transgression so the motivation is to avoid the task of revising but when the students forgave themselves for the transgression of procrastinating and offered some self-compassion rather than piling on the shame and guilt then they were more likely to carry out the task rather than avoid it – so they did not continue to procrastinate.

If we practice self-compassion and use the positive affirmations and remember that “tomorrow will be a good day” we can forgive ourselves for today and try thinking



about WWW and EBI and that we are not procrastinators we just procrastinated on that task.

Causes of life long procrastination

Obviously, there may be very different personal reasons but this is an example.

Maybe someone has weak executive functions (maybe through neurodiversity or modelled behaviour – perhaps parents had weak executive functions themselves) and struggled to remember or understand instructions and then used procrastination as a protective avoidance strategy.

This may then have become the “go to” strategy which then may well have become compounded by guilt and shame which then may have created an anxiety loop – creating even more overwhelm and procrastination.

Many parents and educators had no knowledge of the underlying reasons of procrastination and may have labelled someone as lazy, uncaring or unreliable which may then become internalised and a self-fulfilling prophecy.

When does procrastination usually first show as a behaviour and why?

Similar to the above answer.

It would be really useful, when you notice the signs of procrastination to explore what emotions are being experienced and why. Could be unable to remember or maybe not knowing where to start or maybe does not like doing it or cannot focus.

Create an action plan to notice the emotions and then try to control them and then uncover what it is about the task.

Maybe a step by step instruction board – like mowing the lawn – so each step can be identified and marked off.

Know how long each step will take.

Gamify the steps if it is lack of focus or distraction.



Think about rewards – very frequent small rewards for each step.

Remember procrastination is an emotional coping mechanism and helping to understand why it is happening and showing compassion and understanding is a great start.

Teenage son doesn't like help although needs it

Perhaps reframing it initially as a support for you.

What about if you set up some of the strategies that you have learned from this Webinar and explain to him that you are going to do them and maybe he could do them with you as it would help support you. Taking the spotlight off him and enlisting his help might make him more receptive.

Talk out loud to him about some of the struggles you are having and the emotions it brings up and how you identify them and what you will put in place.

Post it notes, whiteboards, cork boards are all brilliant visual reminders for tasks and you can cross them off when the task is completed – hit of dopamine!

Use concrete thinking – clearly set out the steps to a task and talk him through what you are doing

Talking through how it feels for you and trying different strategies and telling him whether they have worked or not might help open up that conversation and help him to see that it is not just him and that there are strategies that might help.

Paperwork visually causes confusion and overwhelm and is exhausting

I don't have great deal of experience with strategies for visual problems other than perhaps experimenting with using different colour overlays or rulers with different colour tints.



If the overwhelm is more the sight of the paperwork then perhaps breaking this down to creating a task of deciding to complete a very small section of it.

If there is a large amount of paperwork maybe keeping out the one piece you are dealing with and putting the rest in a box so you are not overwhelmed by a large amount of it - as long as you know it is there and don't just forget about it!

Think about your energy zones and doing it a time when you have the most energy.

Make sure you are not hungry or dehydrated.

Take some time for a few deep breaths to help with the overwhelm.

Make the environment as free from distractions and possible and as relaxing as possible – again music, tea etc.

Positive affirmations and remembering your strengths and past achievements.

Concrete thinking so you know exactly what you are doing, when, for how long and when you will stop.

Use Pomodoro and think about what is the maximum amount of time you can spend on this – if it is 5 seconds then use that 5 seconds to put the best use you can which will help towards the next 5 seconds you can spend on it.