



Abuse Survivors and Procrastination

Procrastination, the act of delaying urgent or important tasks until their due date is close, is often seen as a character flaw or weakness. But that is typically not true. **Procrastination is actually a coping technique used to deal with anxiety and doubts about our self-worth.** It is a method of **avoidance**. We use procrastination to avoid completing a task that we are afraid we won't be able to finish according to the standard set for us by ourselves or the person who assigned us the task.

Most people, including non-survivors, will deal with some procrastination in their lives. However, survivors are particularly susceptible to it because we have a **higher level of anxiety and a lower level of self-worth.** And then some of us throw into that mix the self-imposed expectation that everything we do must be done perfectly. Those three factors, significantly increased by our childhood abuse, converge together to make procrastination a challenge for most survivors.

Procrastination is also not always a negative thing. **Sometimes postponing a task is healthy,** even excellent self-care. Procrastination becomes an unhealthy coping technique when it interferes with our ability to do our jobs, manage our homes, care for ourselves and parent our children.

To reduce procrastination in your life implement these tips and strategies:

- Work on **increasing your self-worth** so that you need to implement procrastination as a coping technique less often.
- Work to **decrease your expectation** that you will perform all tasks perfectly. This too will decrease your need to use procrastination as a coping technique.
- **Break tasks down into small parts** and start with those you think are easiest and the most likely that you will perform well. This will create **positive momentum** in the project.
- Partner with **safe people** who will provide you with both **accountability and positive reinforcement.**

* **Pro tip:** Keep track of those tasks you **DO** complete, rather than only a running list of things you need to do, such as drawing a line down the center of the page and labeling one column "To Do" and the other column "Done"

Important: A lack of motivation to undertake necessary tasks can be a symptom of depression. If you experience a lack of motivation, along with low mood please consult your physician. If you are already diagnosed with depression, let your physician know if you experience a marked decrease in motivation.

