



## Simple and Easy Procrastination Buster!

by Deanne Repich

"I'll do it... tomorrow." Sound familiar? Procrastination -- putting things off until the last moment --or beyond the last moment, is a common problem.

For anxiety sufferers, procrastination can really do a number on us mentally and physically. It can put our fight or flight response into high gear and trigger a rush of anxiety symptoms.

Here's the good news: Procrastination is a habit that you can change!

Let's look at why we procrastinate in the first place. Then I'll share a simple and easy procrastination buster you can use immediately.

When we procrastinate, we conserve energy by not doing the task we're avoiding. However, what we often fail to realize is that we're using even MORE energy over the long haul by avoiding the task.

Here are some of the downsides of procrastination:

- Nagging guilt
- Not enjoying other activities because you're thinking about the task
- Feeling disappointed in yourself
- Feeling like you're lazy
- Self-criticism
- Feeling frustrated because you want to get started on the task, but you don't
- Fatigue and lack of energy
- Letting the avoidance control your life
- doing your laundry, meeting friends, cleaning out your filing cabinet -- anything to avoid the task
- Spending lots of time THINKING about the task without DOING the task
- Missing deadlines and making excuses

Most of us are painfully aware of the downsides of procrastination. So why do we procrastinate? I'll bet each of us could come up with a hundred different reasons explaining why... we have a fear of failure, we don't want to disappoint others, we're busy, the task feels overwhelming because we've avoided it for so long, and so on.

Our reasons all boil down to one basic fact: Procrastination is our way of avoiding uncomfortable feelings. When a task seems difficult or overwhelming, we feel uncomfortable.

People gravitate toward things that make them feel COMFORTABLE. We procrastinate because the prospect of doing the task -- even though it benefits us in the long haul -- makes us feel UNCOMFORTABLE.

Even though we don't like procrastinating, it feels like the lesser of two evils. Procrastination seems less uncomfortable than doing the task.

So, what if I showed you a procrastination buster that made the task easier?

What if the task was achievable and you felt comfortable doing it. You'd procrastinate a lot less, wouldn't you? You'd get a lot more done and feel a lot better.

That's what the Divide and Conquer method is all about. The Divide and Conquer method works because it makes you feel COMFORTABLE, and it's EASY. Give it a try!

### **Divide and Conquer Method**

1) Pick an important task that you've been avoiding -- something that you've been wasting lots of energy thinking about. Write it down on a blank piece of paper, for example: "Prepare for job interviews."

Note: Complete this technique on paper instead of mentally because you'll get better results. The process of writing things down keeps your mind from making a task seem more difficult than it really is.

2) Starting at the final goal listed at the top of the page (e.g. Prepare for job interviews), DIVIDE that goal. Break the goal down into several steps, writing each one down.

For example, you might have a list that starts with "Prepare for job interviews" and breaks that task down into ten, twenty, or more steps. Your list of steps might end with "Buy new interview outfit."

3) Read the last step you wrote down. Ask yourself: "Does this feel comfortable? Is it something I know I can easily do?"

If the answer is Yes, CONQUER the goal. Do it right then and there. After you complete the step, congratulate yourself and move on to the item above it on your list. If the answer is No, then Divide and Conquer THAT step.

Repeat the Divide and Conquer process, as many times as necessary until you come up with a step that feels easy, comfortable, and achievable.

For example, if buying an entire interview outfit feels too difficult, then you might divide it into several smaller steps such as "buy new suit," "buy new socks, "and "buy new shoes."

If buying new shoes feels very uncomfortable, divide THAT step into several smaller steps until you reach a step that you know you can easily do (e.g. "decide on shoe color").

DO it, congratulate yourself, and then move one step up the list. It's easy, isn't it?

This Divide and Conquer process works because it allows us to complete even the most intimidating tasks in manageable chunks that fulfill our human desire to feel comfortable.

By doing tasks in a graduated sequence they become easy and doable. In addition, we feel GOOD because we see visible progress. We feel instant gratification -- a sense of accomplishment after completing each small step.

Each step we complete creates a positive snowball effect -- increasing our self-confidence and making it easier to do the next step.

You've probably heard the saying: "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time."

The same goes with any other task.

Divide tasks into easily doable steps that you feel comfortable with and you will succeed. Remember, Divide and Conquer!