

Beyond Procrastination — Eight Questions to Ask Yourself

Why am I constantly putting things off? Why don't I do the things I'm "supposed" to do, but don't really want to? Why do I always seem to be forcing myself to do things? Whether it's chores at home, work for school, or projects at work, how do I get beyond procrastination? Most often, something is operating "underneath" the procrastination. Asking yourself these eight questions and spending some conscious time reflecting on your responses can help you uncover why you are resisting doing what needs to be done and support you to move beyond procrastination.

1. What are the benefits of completing a task and what are the consequences of procrastinating? Another way to ask this question is by exploring these four additional questions: (1) what will happen if I do this? (2) what won't happen if I do this? (3) what will happen if I don't do this? and (4) what won't happen if I don't do this? Reflect on your responses and align with the energy and positivity of right action, doing the right thing, while visualizing successful completion.

2. What is my self-talk like? What are the thoughts that support my resistance? Are my thoughts positive and supporting, or limiting and self-sabotaging? Moving to thoughts of joy, appreciation and gratitude can support you to experience an energy shift allowing you to take action.

3. What is my diet like? Do you experience lows, lethargy, laziness and staleness after eating certain foods or drinking certain liquids? Begin to explore your relationship to food and drink and your energy and moods.

4. What is my Life Force (Chi) energy like? Blocked, lacking, low? When one's life force energy is blocked, there is usually some disequilibrium among mind, body and spirit. Movement which supports the flow of Chi energy (such as Yoga and Tai Chi) can restore balance and energy among mind, body and spirit, allowing your Chi energy to flow which supports action and activity.

5. Am I depressed? You might want to have a physical exam and ask for a professional opinion to explore the possibility of a deeper malaise that may be affecting you.

6. What might be a competing committing that keeps me from acting? In other words, there is something I value more than the task I am resisting. This competing commitment is usually fear-based. As an example, a self-employed entrepreneur is resisting organizing her physical space, her office and work environment. When she inquired into her resistance, by journaling deeply into it, she discovered that when she completed the organization of her space then her next goal would be to focus on her business and she was fearful about taking next steps to grow her business. So her competing commitment was to maintain the status quo and do nothing, to resist and procrastinate. So, what might be something you are valuing more, than the task at hand?

7. Am I "acting out" some childhood resistance, as an adult? For example, if you were brought up to believe that "neatness counts" or "you must be organized", you might be rebelling against this belief by not keeping an organized living or work space. It's important to look "underneath" the resistance to inquire about existing beliefs that are driving you to procrastinate.

8. Am I attempting to maintain some self-image? Many folks procrastinate in order to maintain a positive self-image and be "good." In other words, by procrastinating they exonerate themselves from potential blame if something goes wrong or does not work out as they hope, or plan. In such circumstances, these folks delay taking action in the face of deadlines.

These folks are poor self-managers and have difficulty self-regulating. They may spend an inordinate amount of time rationalizing dysfunctional behaviors as they are resisting "failure" in some way, shape or form. So, the resistance shows up as the following behaviors and attitudes: (1) Ignorance -- I didn't know I was supposed to do that; (2) Skill deficiency -- "I don't know how"; (3) Apathy -- "I really don't want to do" or, "It really doesn't make any difference if I put this off." and "No one really cares if I do this or not." or "I'm not in the mood."; (5) Fixed habits and patterns -- "I've always done it this way and it's hard to change."; and "I know I can do it at the last minute." or, "I work better under pressure."; (6) Inertia -- "I just can't seem to get started."; (7) Frail memory -- "I just forgot."; (8) Physical problems -- "I was sick.; and (9) Perfectionism -- "I can't get started as it won't be perfect."

Asking yourself these eight questions can support you to get underneath procrastination and uncover what's really, really at the root of your inaction. By staying with your responses, and inquiring deeply into them, you can begin to raise your level of awareness about the nature of your resistance and then create and take action steps to move forward to both reduce and eliminate the root causes of your resistance and become a "doer" on a consistent basis.

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---ABOUT THE AUTHOR---

Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D, C.P.C. is a founding partner of **SpiritHeart**, an Atlanta-based company that supports conscious living through coaching, counseling and facilitating. With a practice based on the dynamic intersection of mind, body, emotion and spirit — that is, **Essential Well BE-ing** — Peter's approach focuses on personal, business, relational and spiritual coaching. He is a professional speaker and published author. For more information, www.spiritheart.net or contact pvajda@spiritheart.net or phone **770.804.9125**