

# INSIGHTS THAT MY CLIENTS HAVE TAUGHT ME

## PROCRASTINATION & MOTIVATION

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Procrastination is a curse that many people feel powerless to overcome. Wives complain about husbands who procrastinate. Husbands get angry when children don't do what they're supposed to do, when they're supposed to do it. Bosses get angry with employees who procrastinate and teachers are faced with students whose entire school career is based upon procrastination.

Many people make procrastination out to be much more difficult to overcome than it really is. Have you ever thought about what procrastination is? Many procrastinators see themselves as just being lazy. "I don't know what the matter with me is; you see, I have this problem." These people end up judging themselves and others. They see themselves and others who procrastinate as lazy and irresponsible. Once they label themselves, the problem begins. What does a lazy and irresponsible person do? They procrastinate! Now, the judgment becomes a self fulfilling prophecy. There is a solution. By defining or redefining a thing, it becomes less scary and more manageable. May I suggest a novel definition?

***Procrastination is simply not doing something and then lying to yourself by saying that you did want to do it.*** A lot of people do not want to accept this definition because it ultimately makes them responsible for their procrastinating. People who label themselves as procrastinators usually blame/judge themselves, thereby creating an illusion of powerlessness. The good news is that by accepting responsibly that it is your fault, you can change it.

I really can not look at procrastination without also looking at motivation. "You see, if I could only find the motivation, I wouldn't procrastinate (it is not my fault)!" People who blame the lack of motivation for not getting things done are putting the problem outside of themselves.

Procrastination and motivation are two sides of one coin. Many people make this more difficult than it really is. "If I could only find the motivation, then I would do it." Again, let us define the problem. ***Motivation is simply wanting to do something bad enough that you do it.*** You confuse yourself by pretending that you are looking for motivation as though you were looking for the car keys so

that you can get started. “I can’t get motivated on this project. (There must be something wrong with me).” The truth is, you didn’t want to do it, so you didn’t do it. But if you told the truth, then you would feel guilty because “I should want to do it.” Now, the problem builds and you get to feel even more guilty and powerless. The more powerless you feel, the harder it becomes to be “motivated.”

Viewing motivation as caused by an external source or a mental deficit reinforces the sense of powerlessness and results in a downward cycle.

Stopping the procrastination cycle starts with being aware that you are not being honest with yourself. To change this cycle, listen to your self-talk and start accepting responsibility for your behaviors.

Instead of saying, “I can’t find the motivation,” tell the truth, “I don’t want to do this (it is not fun) and I’m not going to do it until I want to or until it becomes important enough to me that I do it.” The trick to being able to say this is the realization that: **Everything that you do is what you want to do BUT it does not mean that you will enjoy everything that you do.**

If someone holds a gun on you and says “Give me your purse!” Do you have a choice? What are you going to do? I don’t know about you, but I’m motivated and I want to give him my purse. Does that mean I really wanted to give him my purse? Yes, I wanted to give him my purse. Does that mean that I enjoyed giving him my purse? No, but because I didn’t want to get killed, I was doing what was really important to me at that moment. It was more important to go on living than to save a few dollars.

## **Whatever I’m doing, is what I want to do.**

You create an illusion of powerlessness by saying one thing and doing another. “I don’t want to go to work,” and then you go off to work? The truth is ALWAYS in what you do. What would happen if you did not go to work? What is more important, going to work and getting a paycheck or not going to work and getting fired? Motivation is accepting responsibility for all your behaviors whether you enjoy them or not.

Here is a list of some of the contradictions (lies) that I often hear.

- I don’t want to clean the house and I clean the house (because the house needed cleaning).
- I want to stop smoking (but I can’t because it is a habit).
- I want to get married (but I’m not ready). So, what is the truth?
- I don’t want to fight with my spouse (but he/she makes me so mad). So, I want to fight.

- I don't want to yell at my kids (but that is the only way I can get them to behave).
- I want to get a divorce, (but I'm afraid I can't make it on my own), so I never file.
- I hate my job, I want to get a better job (but I'm afraid I won't find a good one) so, I never do a job search.
- I want to lose weight (but I can't because my mother made me eat every thing on my plate) now I have to eat everything on my plate and on your plate too.

Notice that every lie begins with a **but** or a **because**.

Each one of these contradictions between what you say and what you do deepens the illusion of powerlessness. To explain the contradictions, you will try to blame someone or something else. "See, it is not my fault. I can't find the motivation."

What are the contradictions that you use on yourself and who/what do you blame for your lack of action? Notice that your blaming will invariably start with a "but" or "because."

Notice how these sentences change when you accept responsibility for what you do and/or don't do.

- I want to clean the house and I don't have to enjoy it.
- I don't want to stop smoking and I will continue to smoke until I no longer want to burn holes in my clothes, smell like an ashtray and shorten my life and I will not quit smoking until I want to.
- I don't want to get married and I won't get married until I want to get married.
- I want to fight with my spouse and I will continue to fight with him/her until I don't want to fight with them any more.
- I want to yell at my kids and I will continue to feel guilty until I decide not to yell at them or I learn better ways of parenting.
- I don't want to get a divorce and I will not get a divorce until I want to get a divorce.
- I hate my job. I don't want to get a better job for whatever reason and I will not look for another job until I want to.
- I don't want to lose weight. I would rather be fat than go through the pain and anxiety of losing weight and I will be fat until I want to change it.

Notice that the word "**and**" puts the power back into your hands. "I am the captain of my life."

***Once you accept responsibility for not doing something, then you are free, at some later time, to accept the responsibility for doing it.***

When you tell the truth about what you do and what you say, you are accepting responsibility. By accepting responsibility, you are able to empower yourself to be able to change, thereby becoming creditable to yourself and others.

Are you ready to be a powerful and creditable person?

What are the lies that you tell yourself? Make a list of the lies that you tell yourself as evidenced by the fact that what you say and what you do are not the same. Listen for the “but’s” and “because’s” when you talk. You can get your family and friends to help you with this. Ask them where they see you not matching what you say with what you do.

Now, change your list so that you are no longer blaming others and totally responsible for what you do or do not do. Remove the “buts” and “because’s” and replace them with “and.” If you will do this, then motivation and procrastination will no longer be problems in your life.

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