

# Ultimate Guide to Defeat Procrastination:

## Taming Your Dark Horse using the EAT Method



A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Procrastinating? Learn how to tame your Dark Horse and defeat procrastination.



# The Author

HELLO THERE! I'M GUI.

Thank you for downloading this ebook on conquering procrastination.

I intentionally avoided the term "procrastinator" while writing this ebook. Why? I believe it's not a helpful label. We're not "procrastinators," but people who sometimes procrastinate. No one's committed to constant delay; otherwise, jobs, graduations, or even daily tasks would be unachievable. Yet, we all delay tasks occasionally. Understanding and confronting the reasons for this is essential.

My drive is to boost human accomplishment and potential. We shine brightest when we realize our goals, bring our visions to life, and become our best selves. But procrastination can hinder us.

At its core, there's our "Dark Horse"—a side that craves comfort and immediate joy. This voice, seeking ease, is hard to ignore. When we yield, we procrastinate, appeasing this inner voice at our future's expense.

By procrastinating, we're offloading tasks to our future self—a concept I'll explore more here. So, let's dive in and tackle this **now**.

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO DEFEAT PROCRASTINATION

INTRODUCTION


# Harnessing Your Inner Triad to Conquer Procrastination



**BEFORE WE BEGIN,  
REFLECT ON YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

- **Have you ever postponed a task you intended to start right away?**
- **Does your Dark Horse often convince you to delay tasks?**
- **Have distractions ever taken you off course when you planned to work?**
- **Has procrastination ever impacted a major goal or deadline for you?**
- **Do you find the allure of immediate pleasures often outweighs long-term rewards?**
- **Has there been a day where you did less than what you planned because of procrastination?**
- **Do you ever put off tasks thinking you'll be more motivated tomorrow?**
- **Has your Dark Horse ever justified reasons for you to not start a task right away?**

IF YOU SAID "YES" TO ANY OF THOSE QUESTIONS, THIS EBOOK IS FOR YOU. IT'S ALL ABOUT UNDERSTANDING WHY WE PUT THINGS OFF AND HOW TO STOP DOING THAT. BY LOOKING AT THE SNEAKY WAYS OUR "DARK HORSE" MAKES US DELAY TASKS, THIS BOOK GIVES EASY STEPS TO BEAT PROCRASTINATION. LET'S HELP YOU GET THINGS DONE WITHOUT WAITING AROUND ANYMORE. DIVE IN!



At the heart of human endeavor lies an ancient struggle, a triad of forces encapsulated by Plato's allegory of the charioteer and the two-winged horses: the Dark Horse representing our base desires and impulses, the Bright Horse representing our loftiest aspirations and virtues, and the Charioteer, emblematic of our reason and decision-making abilities. Understanding this triad and harnessing its power is paramount for anyone wishing to achieve success in life and in conquering procrastination.

Many have experienced the pull of procrastination, that deceptive urge to delay, postpone, or avoid essential tasks in favor of immediate, and often fleeting, pleasures. The sensation is not unfamiliar: a looming task or deadline awaits, yet the allure of a favorite TV show, the temptation of a sugary treat, or the pull of mindless web browsing can prove overwhelmingly tempting. This is the influence of our Dark Horse, always seeking immediate gratification and often diverging from our true objectives.


However, this short book does not merely provide a diagnostic. It offers a practical roadmap for understanding why we procrastinate and, most importantly, strategies to overpower this debilitating tendency. Central to these strategies is the “EAT” method for taming your Dark Horse. Through the EAT method – E for the Environment, A for the way we Act, and T for the way we Think—I introduce you to actionable steps that place you firmly in the driver's seat, preventing the Dark Horse from leading you astray.

- Environment delves into the importance of sculpting a setting that minimizes distractions, easing the task of the charioteer.
- Act presents ways to chase meaningful goals without being ensnared by the allure of fleeting rewards.
- Think equips the charioteer with cognitive techniques to remain resolute, focused, and in command.

By the end of this ebook, as we conclude our exploration, I propose a 20-day self-control workout, incorporating every strategy presented. This tailored program provides a tangible method for readers to practice, refine, and master their self-control, transforming knowledge into habit.

Whether you're a student, a professional, or simply someone eager to regain control of their life's trajectory, this guide seeks to empower you. The power to transcend procrastination, to align the Dark Horse, Bright Horse, and Charioteer in service of your truest goals, is in this booklet. And through the insights and strategies contained herein, you'll be well-equipped to seize it.

Welcome to a journey of understanding, mastery, and transcendence. Let's begin.



ULTIMATE GUIDE TO DEFEAT PROCRASTINATION

CHAPTER N.1

# The Anatomy of Procrastination





## UNDERSTANDING THE UNDERLYING MECHANISMS

Procrastination is not merely a delay in action; it's an intricate dance between intention and resistance. At its core, it isn't about laziness or a lack of ambition. Rather, it's a conflict between what we want now and what we want most. It's a conflict between what we say we want and the ego trying to protect us from failure.

### **The Dark Horse's Lure: Immediate Gratification vs. Long-Term Goals**

The Dark Horse in Plato's allegory represents our instinctual, passionate, and immediate desires. This is the horse that craves that chocolate bar even though we're on a diet or yearns for just one more episode on Netflix when we should be working. The Dark Horse thrives in the present, seeking instant gratification without considering long-term implications.

In today's digital age, the Dark Horse is continually being tempted. With immediate pleasures a click away and distractions at every corner, its strength has grown. We live in a world that offers a myriad of instant rewards. Hence, the Dark Horse is more catered to than ever.


### **Historical and Cultural Perspectives on Procrastination**

The act of delaying tasks isn't a new phenomenon. Throughout history, scholars, artists, and thinkers have grappled with procrastination. Ancient texts and philosophical discourses provide evidence that even our ancestors faced the pull of the Dark Horse.

Different cultures view procrastination through various lenses. In some cultures, taking time to reflect and delay immediate action is seen as wisdom. In others, swift action is prized. But universally, there's a distinction between mindful reflection and detrimental delay.

Today's society, with its emphasis on efficiency and productivity, often views procrastination negatively. We're in an age of "hustle," where delay is equated with lost opportunity. But this view, as prevalent as it is, overlooks the complexities within the act of procrastinating.

As we dive deeper into this ebook, we'll dissect these complexities further. We'll understand how our internal triad — the Dark Horse, the bright horse, and the charioteer — plays a pivotal role in the decisions we make. Procrastination, as we'll come to see, isn't a sign of weakness but a result of an internal struggle, one that we can understand and master.



ULTIMATE GUIDE TO DEFEAT PROCRASTINATION

CHAPTER N.2

# The Psychology Behind the Delay







## Why Do We Procrastinate?

The interplay between the Dark Horse and the Charioteer, and our ensuing struggle with procrastination, is deeply rooted in psychological processes. Procrastination isn't simply an act of laziness; it's a complex dance of cognitive processes, learned behaviors, and emotional responses. Various studies pinpoint myriad reasons for this behavior, including poor time management, discomfort with tasks, anxiety, fear of failure, and personal characteristics such as neurotic tendencies and perfectionism. Here is explore of the reasons why procrastination controls our lives.

### **The Brain's Dueling Systems**

As previously noted, our brains contain two dominant systems. System I, the "hot" system from the limbic region, is synonymous with our Dark Horse, driving our desires and impulses. System II, the "cold" system in the pre-frontal cortex, echoes the charioteer's rational and strategic thought processes. This battle between short-term pleasure and long-term discipline is central to our procrastination tendencies.

### **Ego Depletion: Drained Willpower Reservoir**


A pivotal factor in procrastination is the concept of ego depletion. Coined by social psychologist Roy Baumeister, this term refers to the idea that self-control and willpower are finite resources that can be depleted over time. As we go about our day, making decisions and exercising self-control, our reservoir of willpower dwindles. When it's reduced, the Dark Horse gains a stronger foothold, pushing us towards easier, immediate gratifications rather than tasks requiring more effort and discipline. For instance, after a taxing day of making decisions at work, one might find it harder to resist the allure of a comfy couch and a TV show instead of hitting the gym. Recognizing and managing our energy and willpower levels become crucial in ensuring we don't fall into the procrastination trap during our vulnerable moments.


### **The Power of Immediate Rewards**

Evolutionarily, our ancestors were wired for immediate action—be it seizing food or escaping threats. Today, though, these survival instincts can become misdirected, leading us to choose transient pleasures like binge-watching a show over more substantial long-term gains like finishing a project. Our Dark Horse thrives in immediate rewards.

### **Aversive Self-awareness and Cognitive Narrowing**

A significant trigger for procrastination is aversive self-awareness. When confronted with a challenging task or a situation that might reflect negatively on our self-worth or abilities, we become hyper-aware of these potential threats to the ego. This heightened self-focus can lead to feelings of embarrassment, discomfort or even shame.





To escape this aversive state, our brain engages in "cognitive narrowing," where it limits the scope of attention to avoid or escape ego-threatening stimuli. This is where procrastination enters as a defense mechanism—it's an attempt to distance ourselves from tasks or situations causing this negative self-judgement.

### **Emotional Evasion: Escaping Negative Emotions**

In line with aversive self-awareness, our emotional state is pivotal in influencing procrastination. Often, it's not the task itself but the negative emotions associated with it—be it fear, insecurity, or inadequacy—that we're trying to avoid. Procrastination becomes an emotional coping mechanism, allowing individuals to shift away from situations or tasks that evoke these unpleasant feelings.

### **Perfectionism: A Double-Edged Sword**

Although it might seem commendable, perfectionism can be a potent fuel for procrastination. The underlying fear of producing sub-par work, or of being judged for it, can be paralyzing. It's a defense mechanism—by not beginning, we shield ourselves from potential criticism or failure.

### **Poor Time Management**

Our daily lives are filled with countless tasks, responsibilities, and distractions. Unfortunately, not all of us are adept at managing our time effectively. For many, poor time management stems from an inability to prioritize tasks or to estimate how long each task will take. When we overcommit or misjudge, we feel overwhelmed, and the Dark Horse sees an opportunity. It nudges us towards the illusion that "there's always tomorrow." Thus, by mismanaging our time, we inadvertently open the door for procrastination to enter, often underestimating its long-term implications.

### **Discomfort with Tasks**


Some tasks are inherently uninteresting or repetitive, making them prime targets for procrastination. When faced with such tasks, our Dark Horse whispers of other more enjoyable activities we could be doing. The sheer mundanity or repetitiveness of the task amplifies the allure of distractions. While the charioteer knows the importance of these tasks, the Dark Horse's siren call of immediate pleasure often proves too tempting, making us defer the task to another day.


### **Anxiety**

Fear and anxiety play significant roles in our inclination to procrastinate. Be it the magnitude of the task, the potential outcomes, or the unknown variables, these daunting feelings can freeze our progress. The Dark Horse, sensing our trepidation, is quick to suggest retreat or diversion. Rather than tackling the source of our anxiety head-on, we're lured into activities that provide momentary relief but no real solution.

### **Temporal Discounting and Its Role in Procrastination**

Temporal discounting is a cognitive phenomenon that describes our tendency to favor immediate rewards over future ones, even if the future rewards are larger or more beneficial. In simpler terms, it's our inclination to choose a smaller reward today rather than wait for a bigger one tomorrow. The further away a reward is in time, the more we 'discount' its value.



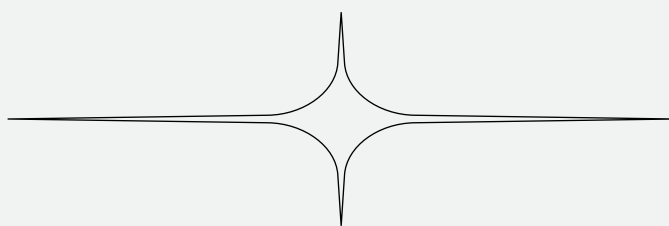


How does temporal discounting relate to our topic: procrastination. Procrastination is essentially the act of delaying or postponing tasks that we should be doing now. At first glance, it might seem counterintuitive. Why would we delay something that we know needs to be done? The answer, in many cases, lies in temporal discounting.

When faced with a task, our brains often assess the immediate rewards of doing versus not doing it. Let's consider an example. Imagine you have a report due in a week. You could start working on it today, but that would require effort, focus, and potentially sacrificing a more enjoyable activity. On the other hand, you could watch a movie or hang out with friends. In this scenario, the immediate pleasure of watching the movie or spending time with friends is a tangible reward. The reward for starting the report – a less stressful week and the satisfaction of a job well done – is in the future and therefore 'discounted' in value.


In prehistoric times, immediate rewards (like eating food when it's available) often meant the difference between survival and death. Hence, our ancestors who prioritized immediate benefits often had better survival rates. However, in today's complex society, this evolutionary trait can work against us, especially when it comes to tasks that have deferred outcomes.

The interplay between temporal discounting and procrastination is a dance of immediate versus future rewards. Knowing this gives us a tool. If we can make the rewards of not procrastinating more immediate or the consequences of delaying more tangible, we can tilt the balance in favor of action. This can be achieved by setting shorter-term milestones, giving ourselves immediate rewards for task completion, or visualizing the future benefits more vividly.



Unraveling the psychological intricacies of procrastination provides a clearer path to countering it. Recognizing the cognitive and emotional drivers of delay empowers us to construct effective strategies to tackle them head-on.


As we progress to the next chapter, we will delve into the EAT method—a comprehensive approach to harnessing your self-control, enabling you to navigate the turbulent waters of procrastination and set sail towards your goals.



CHAPTER N.3

# Diagnosing Your Procrastination Triggers





While we've discussed the anatomy of procrastination, understanding the root causes unique to you is essential. Everyone has different triggers, and by identifying yours, you can adopt strategies to effectively manage them. This chapter will guide you through a self-assessment to uncover these triggers and understand the underlying factors, be it aversive self-awareness, cognitive narrowing, or other personal influences.

#### 1. The Brain's Dueling Systems

- Do you often choose short-term pleasure over long-term gains?
- When faced with a task, do you impulsively decide to do something more enjoyable instead?

#### 2. The Power of Immediate Rewards

- Are you easily tempted by distractions when you have pending tasks?
- Do you prioritize activities that offer immediate pleasure over those that benefit you in the long run?

#### 3. Aversive Self-awareness and Cognitive Narrowing

- Do you avoid tasks that make you feel inadequate or highlight your shortcomings?
- When a task seems challenging, do you find ways to distance yourself from it?

#### 4. Emotional Evasion

- Do you put off tasks because of the negative emotions they evoke, such as fear or insecurity?
- When you think about a daunting task, do you feel overwhelmed by negative emotions?

#### 5. Perfectionism

- Do you delay starting tasks out of fear that they won't be perfect?
- Are you worried about criticism and, therefore, avoid beginning a task?

#### 6. Poor Time Management

- Do you often find yourself overwhelmed because you've taken on too much?
- Are there tasks you've put off just because you felt you could do them "later"?

#### 7. Discomfort with Tasks

- Are there specific tasks you delay because they're boring or repetitive?
- Do you often look for more exciting activities to avoid mundane tasks?

#### 8. Anxiety

- Does anxiety or fear make you put off tasks?
- When faced with a task that makes you anxious, do you seek distractions to avoid it?


#### 9. Temporal Discounting

- Do you usually choose immediate, smaller rewards over larger, future ones?
- When given a choice, do you opt for what feels good now rather than what's beneficial in the long run?

#### Tackling Your Triggers

Once you've identified these triggers, the next step is acknowledging them without judgment. Understand that these triggers don't define you but are merely hurdles you can overcome.


In the subsequent chapters, using the EAT system, we will delve deep into each of these triggers, understanding their psychology, and most importantly, equipping you with the tools to manage and conquer them. Remember, self-awareness is the first step towards change. By diagnosing your unique triggers, you're already on the path to mastering self-control and curbing procrastination.



CHAPTER N.4

# The Dynamics of Change





When we aim to stop procrastinating, we're essentially looking to change our habits, and change is undoubtedly challenging. To truly grasp the essence of change, we must delve into its opposite – non-change. At its core, non-change is the manifestation of the deep-seated forces resisting change itself. This chapter delves into these forces, shedding light on how we can navigate and counteract them to achieve our goals.


**1. Quasi-Equilibrium:** A central concept in understanding non-change is Kurt Lewin's idea of quasi-equilibrium. According to Lewin, our lives are in a near-constant state of balance between forces that drive change (pro-change forces) and forces that maintain the status quo (pro-status quo forces). This equilibrium determines our current state of achievement, or the status quo. To disrupt this balance and achieve new outcomes, we either need to amplify the forces that favor change or diminish the ones that oppose it.


*Ava wants to start writing her novel (pro-change force). However, her habit of watching TV when she gets home and her fear of not writing well enough (pro-status quo forces) keep her from starting. She remains in a state of wanting to write but never actually doing it.*

Identifying Forces: Lewin's theory emphasizes introspection. He suggests that we need to identify and understand these pro-change and pro-status quo forces individually, and recognize their roles in either aiding or hampering our progress. A helpful exercise is to visualize these forces as they pertain to a specific goal, understanding both the barriers and supports in place.

**2. Regression Toward Mediocrity:** A fascinating aspect of this quasi-equilibrium is our inclination to revert to average or mediocre performance levels. Despite our best efforts, there seems to be an invisible pull that drags us back to our "average" state. This idea is backed by various historical studies, suggesting that excellence is often fleeting, with systems inherently leaning towards stability or returning to the mean.

*Mark, a student, pulls an all-nighter and manages to submit a project on time, receiving praise. Motivated, he decides to start early for the next assignment. However, after a few days, he reverts to his old habits of last-minute work, showing that the initial motivation didn't translate to a consistent change in behavior.*






**3. Entropy:** Yet another force that pushes us towards non-achievement is entropy. In simple terms, entropy denotes a system's inherent tendency to decline into disorder. It acts as a reminder that maintaining changes or improvements requires ongoing effort and energy. Otherwise, the system (or our lives) naturally gravitates back to its old, familiar state.

*Mia redesigns her workspace to be more conducive to work, hoping it'll help her stop procrastinating. However, within a week, her desk becomes cluttered again with unrelated items, snacks, and distractions. Her effort to create order has naturally drifted back into disorder, making it easier for her to procrastinate.*

**Untangling the Web and Setting New Patterns:** Recognizing these concepts reshapes our perception of personal growth and goal achievement. It helps us realize that achieving our goals isn't merely about desire; it's about understanding the complex interplay of forces in our lives. Genuine change isn't about isolated actions or victories; it's about creating and maintaining new patterns of behavior over time.

*Jake realizes he procrastinates on tasks he finds difficult. Instead of just pushing through occasionally, he decides to create a pattern: breaking tasks into smaller parts and starting with the ones he enjoys, making the difficult ones feel more approachable. Over time, this new pattern becomes his default, reducing his tendency to delay tasks.*

Embracing change requires introspection, an understanding of the opposing forces in our lives, and the consistent application of effort, energy, and time. Change is indeed challenging, but with a comprehensive grasp of what holds us back, we are better equipped to move forward.






CHAPTER N.5

# Taming the Whims of Lady Motivation





Many business professionals and students, when confronted with procrastination, often find themselves trapped in a waiting game. They're awaiting a jolt, a burst of inspiration, believing it will come from the unpredictable Lady Motivation. They sit with eager anticipation, hoping she will bless them with her presence and spark the drive to dive into their tasks.

A mysterious and elusive figure, Lady Motivation is capricious, unpredictable, and rarely appears just when we need her the most. You might recognize her absence in moments when you've opened your notebook, ready to jot down a flurry of ideas, only to find your mind blank. Or perhaps you've settled down with your study material, only to feel an overwhelming urge to engage in any other activity.


The truth about Lady Motivation is that you should not rely on her to get things done. She comes and goes as she pleases, often leaving us feeling stranded and helpless. We think we need her to inject us with the energy and focus required to accomplish our goals, but that's a misconception. Depending solely on her is a flawed strategy to battle procrastination.

The key to managing procrastination isn't waiting around for Lady Motivation. Instead, it's about understanding that action is what attracts her. Think of her as a force that's attracted to momentum. When you start typing, reading, or engaging in any task, however mundane, Lady Motivation is more likely to make her appearance. This aligns with the psychology of 'flow' – a state where we are so deeply involved in an activity that we lose track of time and surroundings. Flow is, essentially, Lady Motivation showering us with her full attention.

But achieving a state of flow or attracting Lady Motivation shouldn't be the primary goal. The goal should always be action. By merely diving into the task, regardless of how uninspired or unmotivated we feel, we can light a spark that might just ignite a flame of motivation. It's a positive loop – the more we act, the more Lady Motivation visits, making future tasks feel less daunting.

The Dark Horse of procrastination thrives in the void left by Lady Motivation. It lures us into inaction, waiting for the "perfect" moment. But remember, waiting is the Dark Horse's game. By stepping forward, by pushing through initial resistance, we not only fend off the Dark Horse but also send an open invitation to Lady Motivation.

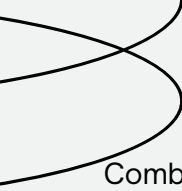
It's essential to recognize that while Lady Motivation is a welcome presence, she isn't a necessity. Our focus should always be on the task at hand, on taking that first step, even when it feels challenging. Because as we've seen, the act of doing not only propels us forward but also increases the chances of Lady Motivation gracing us with her presence in the future. So, the next time you find yourself waiting for that burst of motivation, remember to just start. She'll likely join you along the way.



CHAPTER N.6

# The Critical Need to Combat Procrastination





Combating procrastination is not just about ticking tasks off a list; it's a game-changer for our life's trajectory. Here's why:

**1. Boost Self-Efficacy:** The more you tackle procrastination head-on, the stronger your sense of accomplishment grows. This not only helps you in that particular task but also increases your confidence to excel in other areas of life. You don't just achieve in one domain; you become a habitual achiever.

**2. Alleviate Future Burdens:** Procrastinating today means you're leaving tasks for your future self. Being proactive now reduces the load on tomorrow's you, making life smoother and less stressful.

**3. Uphold Promises to Yourself:** Imagine a life where every commitment you make to yourself gets honored. It not only boosts your self-worth but also reinforces the trust you have in yourself.

**4. The Epsilon-Cost Effect:** Epsilon-costs refer to seemingly negligible quantities or small decisions that, when taken together or compounded over time, end up making a substantial difference. At a glance, minor deviations or distractions may seem insignificant. Eat a cookie, scroll social media for 5 minutes, or skip a short workout, and it seems harmless. But these tiny choices, when accumulated over time, create the tapestry of our life. It's the "patchwork quilt" effect where seemingly inconsequential decisions, when repeated, shape our identities. Similarly, procrastinating once in a while won't define your future. When it becomes a pattern, it has serious consequences.

**5. Enhanced Career Progression and Job Performance:** Procrastination can be a silent career killer. When you delay tasks, you're not just pushing back a deadline; you're sending a message about your reliability, time management, and commitment. On the flip side, consistently completing tasks in a timely manner showcases professionalism, leadership, and dedication. Employees who exhibit these traits are often first in line for promotions, bonuses, and other career opportunities. Moreover, in roles where performance metrics are crucial, avoiding procrastination directly correlates to meeting or even surpassing those metrics, thus shining in the eyes of superiors.


**6. Improved Mental Well-being:** Research consistently shows that chronic procrastinators experience higher levels of stress and anxiety. By acting on tasks promptly, you not only lower these stress levels but also enhance your overall mental well-being. Peace of mind comes from knowing you're on top of things.

**7. Better Decision Making:** Procrastination often leads to rushed decisions as deadlines loom. By being proactive, you grant yourself the luxury of time. This allows for more comprehensive research, reflection, and consequently, better decision-making.

**8. Improved Health:** Yes, procrastination can affect your health! Delaying tasks, especially health-related ones, like doctor visits or workout sessions, can have direct health consequences. Moreover, the stress from procrastination can contribute to sleep disturbances, compromised immune function, and even cardiovascular health issues.

**9. Learning Efficiency:** For students, procrastination has been linked to lower grades. But more than that, spacing out study sessions and being consistent in studying leads to better retention and understanding of material, thanks to the spacing effect.

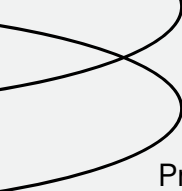
**10. Financial Benefits:** Procrastinating on financial decisions, bills, or investment opportunities can be costly. Being timely can save you from late fees, penalties, and missed opportunities. Remember, every day you choose not to procrastinate, you're not just completing tasks; you're building a better, healthier, and more efficient version of yourself.



CHAPTER N.7

# When Is It Okay to Procrastinate?





Procrastination, often deemed the nemesis of progress, is typically portrayed as the manifestation of laziness or inefficiency. While this can sometimes be the case, there are scenarios where postponing a task might not only be acceptable but also strategic. However, it's vital to distinguish between genuine reasons and mere excuses.

Occasions when procrastinating might be okay include:

- **Overlapping Priorities:** Sometimes, unexpected events or tasks emerge that require immediate attention, compelling us to reshuffle our to-do list.
- **Physical or Mental Exhaustion:** If one is genuinely drained or not in the right state of mind, pushing a task to a more appropriate time might lead to better results.
- **Lack of Information or Resources:** There are instances when it's advisable to delay a task because you're waiting for additional information or resources to ensure it's done correctly.
- **Reflective Decision-making:** For decisions that have significant implications, sometimes it's best to sleep on it or take some time to reflect before taking action.

Keep in mind that while these reasons might seem legitimate, it's essential to tread with caution.

Caveat: The instances mentioned above should not become routine justifications for putting off tasks. Do not give yourself Permissions to Sin. Combatting procrastination effectively means mastering control over our Dark Horse - that inner voice which seductively whispers reasons to delay tasks. If you're consistently allowing your Dark Horse to convince you, it will become adept at crafting excuses, even for very important tasks.

So, how does one discern when it's genuinely okay to delay a task? Here's a methodical approach:

A Four-Step Method to Determine Procrastination's Validity:


**1. Analyze the Task:** Clearly define what the task is and why it's on your list. Recognize its importance and urgency in the grand scheme of things.

**2. Assess Urgency and Importance:** Using the Eisenhower Box (or Urgent-Important Matrix), classify your task. If it's neither urgent nor important, it's okay to postpone.

**3. Evaluate Your Reasoning:** Cross-check the reason you're considering delaying the task with the valid scenarios shared above. Is your rationale genuinely valid, or is it just an easy way out? In other words, is it your Dark Horse speaking?

**4. Set Clear Rescheduling Goals:** If you decide to postpone, be specific about when you'll revisit the task. A vague "I'll do it later" is not sufficient. Assign it a definite time and stick to it.


While there are instances when procrastination might be justifiable, it's essential to be brutally honest in our self-evaluations. Continuously yielding to the seductive power of our Dark Horse can form a habitual cycle of delay, negatively impacting our growth and progression.



CHAPTER N.8

# Understanding the EAT Method to Combat Procrastination





The EAT method has been developed as a systematic approach to understand the factors affecting our self-control, offering a comprehensive framework to address the roots of procrastination.

The EAT method stands for Environment, Actions, and Thinking. Each component of this acronym represents a distinct dimension of our lives that can either aid us in our endeavors or lead us astray.

**E for Environment:**

The environment encapsulates the surroundings in which we operate. It includes both the tangible physical space we occupy, like our workspace, and the intangible digital sphere, such as online platforms and digital communications. The environment can have a profound impact on our productivity and focus. If it's chaotic or filled with distractions, it can steer us away from our objectives.

**A for Actions:**

Actions refer to our behaviors, habits, and the tangible steps we take daily. Every action, no matter how insignificant it may seem, has consequences. Actions can set into motion a series of events, influencing our environment and internal state. For instance, repeatedly checking one's phone can become a habit, diverting attention from essential tasks and affecting productivity.

**T for Thinking:**


Thinking revolves around our internal cognitive processes. It encompasses our beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and emotional responses. The way we perceive challenges, our self-belief, and our general outlook towards tasks all fall under this category. Negative thinking patterns can be significant roadblocks, while positive patterns can be powerful drivers of success.

**Rooted in Force Field Analysis:**

The underpinnings of the EAT system can be traced back to the Force Field Analysis concept. This approach recognizes that various forces in our life, categorized under Environment, Actions, and Thinking, can influence our ability to control our actions. Some of these forces can propel us towards our goals, while others can detract us.

**Biological Inspiration:**

The EAT method also draws inspiration from biological models of adaptation. Julian Huxley, an influential evolutionary biologist, found that organisms' success is often tied to their ability to control their environment and maintain inner stability. Similarly, the EAT method posits that we, as humans, can better navigate our challenges by understanding and managing our external environment, internal cognitive processes, and the actions we undertake.







### **The Importance of Preconditions:**


Before diving deeper into the EAT method, it's essential to highlight the importance of certain preconditions for self-control. The effectiveness of the EAT system will be significantly influenced by the...

- clarity of our goals,
- our underlying motivation,
- our commitment to the cause, and
- our self-awareness levels.

**Pre-committing to Commit:** Prioritize commitment to your goals. Before diving into specific tasks or projects, or trying to overcome the pull of procrastination, make an overarching agreement with yourself that emphasizes the commitment to tasks aligned with your ultimate goals. Make completing tasks and not postponing action (unless necessary) your mantra.

- Make a 'pre-pre-commitment' to always stand by your word and take actions that align with your larger goals.
- Exercise: Craft a "mental contract" detailing your goals, the steps to achieve them, a deadline, and a clause that makes you accountable for achieving your goal.
- Make the commitment tangible and demonstrate determination. Suggestions include:
  - a. Being strict with usage of social media accounts.
  - b. Isolating oneself until the task is done.
  - c. Freezing smartphone use.
  - d. Locking yourself in a room until a project completion.
  - e. Disconnecting from electronics for a week.
  - f. Taking a sabbatical.

In essence, the EAT method provides a framework to understand the myriad forces at play in our daily lives. By dissecting these factors, we're better equipped to address the root causes of procrastination and regain control over our time and focus.



CHAPTER N.9

# The 'E' in the EAT Method - Environment Mastery



The E on EAT, our first step towards a life free of procrastination.

Our environment significantly impacts our behavior, decision-making, and ability to achieve goals. Why is this? Our behaviors are more influenced by environmental factors than we often realize. From physical conditions and available technology to the influence of those around us—be it co-workers, family, partners, or classmates—our surroundings are replete with cues that shape our actions. By recognizing and harnessing these environmental elements, we can better control our Dark Horse, combat procrastination, and set ourselves on a path to success. The 'E' in the EAT method underscores this environmental mastery, and in this chapter, I offer strategies to optimize our surroundings in support of our goals.

## **Strategy #1: Tracking Environmental Distractions**

In today's world, distractions are everywhere—from the ping of a notification to the casual chat with a coworker. It's essential to identify, monitor, and manage these distractions to stay on track. Begin by recognizing the elements in your environment that pull your attention away from tasks. Are they physical, like background noise or clutter? Digital, such as app notifications or frequent emails? Or perhaps they're interpersonal, like a talkative colleague or a demanding friend.

### **Reflective Questions:**

1. What specific elements in your environment tend to divert your attention most frequently?
2. How can you modify or adjust these distractions to be less invasive?
3. Who or what in your surroundings energizes you or enhances your productivity? How can you integrate more of these positive influences?
4. How might you create boundaries or habits that shield you from environmental interruptions during focused work periods?

### **Exercises:**

- Make a list of frequent distractions in your workspace. Next to each, jot down a solution or preventive measure.
- Attempt a workday without any screens (phones, computers) during breaks.

## Strategy #2: "This 'r Nothing"

"This 'r Nothing" is a hyper-focus strategy to avoid procrastination, emphasizing the importance of mono-tasking or concentrating on a single task. The principle is straightforward: Either you work on the designated task, or you do absolutely nothing. This method curbs the urges of the Dark Horse to engage in other distracting activities, making you more likely to commit to the primary task because the alternative (doing nothing) is often less appealing.

Here's a snapshot:

- **Purpose:** This strategy requires that for a predetermined duration, usually ranging from 20 to 45 minutes, you either immerse yourself in a chosen task or do absolutely nothing (task switching is not allowed, so you can't kick the can down the road, procrastinate). No distractions, no diversions. Whether it's checking your phone, browsing social media, or even a simple trip to the fridge - it's off the table.
- **Implementation:** Picture a scenario where you've committed to studying a particular subject, say organic chemistry. ***You allocate your time and then either dive deep into studying or, if not feeling it, simply sit still, doing nothing.*** What you'll quickly observe is that after a couple of seconds doing nothing, diving into the task becomes the more appealing option.
- **Experience with the Dark Horse:** Using this method, you'll quickly recognize the crafty seductions of your Dark Horse, trying to steer you away from your focus. Suggestions will range from sudden feelings of hunger, thirst, fatigue, or the urge to check social media. By recognizing and resisting these temptations, you're essentially taming the Dark Horse.
- **Feedback:** Users have testified to the strategy's efficacy, noting how they battled various distractions (all instigated by the Dark Horse) but persisted, thus reaping the rewards of focused productivity. Common distractions range from a sudden urge to snack, check mail, or peek into what's happening on social media.
- **Outcome:** When committed, you'll be surprised at the magnitude of what you can achieve in short, focused bursts. By continually practicing this method, not only will you strengthen your resistance to the Dark Horse's sweet talk, but you'll also enhance your productivity, achieving more in less time.

In essence, the "This 'r Nothing" strategy underscores a simple yet profound truth: undivided attention to a task, devoid of distractions, magnifies productivity. It also assists in discerning the seductive whispers of the Dark Horse, ensuring you remain in control of your actions and choices.

## Strategy #3: Alone Time

Alone Time is all about providing yourself with a quiet space, devoid of external influences, to think, create, and work. This strategy doesn't just advocate physical solitude but also mental – free from the digital world's incessant pings and buzzes, and interruptions caused by others in your social circle. It's a sacred time where one can delve deep into tasks or thoughts without the fear of interruption.

Every day, no matter what, I'm at my desk by 7 a.m. It's a rule I set for myself. Why? Because it's quiet, I'm fresh, and there's zero distractions. Just me and my tasks.

This hour isn't about being busy; it's about getting things done right at the start of the day. No phones buzzing, no random pop-ins – it's just about the work in front of me. Being consistent with this 7 a.m. start gives me a jump on the day. I get a lot done and it sets the pace for the rest of my day. Simple as that. It's my way of taking control and making sure every day counts.

### Reflective Questions:

1. When was the last time you truly spent time alone without any distractions?
2. When can you still Alone Time to focus on projects?
3. What barriers prevent you from finding alone time in your daily routine?

### Exercises:

- Schedule 60 minutes of "alone time" daily for a week. Keep a journal of insights or breakthroughs during this time.
- Identify a quiet space in your home or workspace where you can regularly practice "alone time".

## Strategy #4: Systems:

Create a robust system around your goals to keep you on track. Renowned personalities, such as Ludwig van Beethoven and W. H. Auden, have used structured systems to remain focused on their work. Systems can be more effective than mere goals because they guide everyday actions without being limited by deadlines. Reflect on your daily system for getting things done and restructure it to better align with your desired outcomes.

We often talk about the importance of having goals. I argue that having systems is more important than goals. Goals are targets for the future, but they don't guide you day-to-day. You may have a goal but no structure on how to achieve it. Systems, however, are daily habits that keep you moving forward. They give you a routine that can be applied to any goal.

Here's my system for my days:

- Start sharp at 7 a.m.: Dedicated work time.
- Prioritize significant projects over routine tasks.
- Implement the "This 'R Nothing" principle (If writing's tough, I still push through).
- Aim to add value in every task I undertake.

Simple and effective. That's my system. Day in and day out, sunshine or rain. Whatever my goal is, this system consistently produces good results.

### Reflective Questions:

1. How do you currently structure your daily tasks?
2. Do you have an effective system for goal achievement?
3. In what ways does your current system enhance or hinder your progress?

### Exercises:

- Create a daily routine for one week that includes both work and personal activities.
- Dedicate at least one hour each day to projects that leverage your academic or professional accomplishments and apply your system to them. Ensure no other activities interrupt this period. Commit to it everyday.
- Break down your schedule into time for alone time, deep work, meetings, and exercise. Be diligent about how you structure your day.

CHAPTER N.10

# The 'A' in the EAT Method: The Power of Action



The essence of this chapter is straightforward: what you do defines your success. Life isn't measured by intentions but by tangible results. While setting goals is a necessary first step, it's only through action that these goals come to fruition. Procrastination means delaying those crucial actions, and that's precisely what this chapter aims to combat.

My personal experience reflects this. For a long time, I had aspirations and dreams, but they remained just that - dreams. There was a mismatch between what I wanted and what I was actually doing to achieve it. I wasn't alone in this. Many people I spoke to express the same frustration. They knew what needed to be done but struggled to do it. This disconnect between knowledge and action is termed the "knowing-doing" gap.

Consider a Charioteer who knows where to go but can't get the horses to move. It's the same with our goals. Knowing isn't enough; taking consistent steps towards those goals is what counts.

To achieve new goals, you must do things differently. This is about action, not mere thought. You can't just think your way to success; you must act on it.

Simply put, talk is cheap. Knowledge without action is pointless. Only by acting can we close the knowing-doing gap. It's also worth noting that while thinking and strategizing are important, they aren't everything. Research indicates that hands-on experiences and actions play a significant role in our ability to regulate ourselves and achieve our goals.

In this chapter, we'll explore the importance of action, how to overcome barriers to acting, and why it's crucial for achieving your goals.

## **Strategy #1: The No-Thinking Zone: Taming the Dark Horse of Overthinking**

In a world that values deep thinking, it might seem strange to talk about the power of "not thinking." But there's real wisdom in taking a break from overanalyzing things. We often put aside, or procrastinate, low yield tasks that are deemed boring and uninteresting, or high yield tasks that can be daunting. Your Dark Horse, with its persuasive power, will convince your Charioteer that these tasks deserve to be placed aside as you probably have more exciting things to tend to.

Many of us know the feeling of being stuck because we think too much (in this case, on the conversation between your Dark Horse and the Charioteer). Instead of getting trapped in endless thoughts, there's a simpler approach: just act. This doesn't mean acting without thinking, but rather trusting ourselves more and overanalyzing less. It's like the steady, focused walk of an ox with a heavy load. It doesn't get distracted; it just keeps moving forward.

### **Reflective Questions:**

1. How often do you find yourself stuck in a loop of overthinking rather than taking action?
2. Can you recall a situation where not thinking and simply doing would have yielded a better result?
3. How can you apply the 'no-thinking zone' approach in your daily tasks and long-term goals?

### **Exercise:**

1. List down three tasks that you've been putting off.
2. Just do them! Write the first word, and then the first sentence. Make the call. Open the browser.
3. Allocate specific times in the day where you enter the 'no-thinking zone' and work on these tasks without any distractions or contemplations.
4. After a week, reflect on the progress made. How did the 'no-thinking zone' impact your efficiency and mental clarity?

By mastering the 'no-thinking zone', actions become louder than thoughts, and the Dark Horse of overthinking is skillfully tamed to lead you towards success.

## Strategy #2: The No-Feeling Zone: Overcoming the Dark Horse of Emotional Hurdles

In today's world, our feelings govern many of our decisions. "I don't feel like it" becomes an all-too-common refrain. While it's essential to honor our emotions, it's equally crucial to recognize when they stand in the way of our productivity. The Dark Horse, with its cunning, often exploits our feelings, whispering discouraging sentiments or suggesting more gratifying distractions.

Many of us recognize the struggle of letting feelings dictate our actions. Instead of succumbing to the emotional tugs that pull us away from our tasks, I suggest a different route: act regardless of how you feel. This doesn't imply neglecting or suppressing our emotions. Instead, it's about acknowledging them, setting them aside momentarily, and then focusing on the task at hand. It's similar to a ship sailing through a storm, acknowledging the turbulent waters but staying steady on its course.

### Reflective Questions:

1. How often do you find yourself sidetracked from tasks because of your feelings?
2. Can you recall a situation where pushing past your feelings and taking action led to unexpected benefits?
3. How can you employ the 'no-feeling zone' approach to navigate daily procrastination?

### Exercise:

1. Identify three tasks or projects that your feelings have kept you from addressing.
2. Act on them! Even if you "don't feel like it," start. Delve into the first task, immerse yourself in the process. Often, engagement can shift feelings.
3. Designate particular times during your day for the 'no-feeling zone.' During these intervals, work on tasks without letting feelings hinder you.
4. Reflect at the end of the week. How did the 'no-feeling zone' influence your productivity and overall emotional state?

By harnessing the power of the 'no-feeling zone', you'll find that tasks become manageable, and the Dark Horse's emotional influence diminishes, paving the way for consistent progress.

Here are 10 examples of how the Dark Horse capitalizes on our emotions to suggest we "don't feel like" doing something:

1. "You feel exhausted. How can you possibly go for that run?"
2. "The weight of all these tasks feels suffocating. Surely you can take a break today."
3. "The weather is chilly and damp. Who would want to do anything outdoors?"
4. "After the kind of day you've had, cooking dinner feels like climbing a mountain. You should order takeout."
5. "You feel unequipped to tackle that complex project right now. Wait for when you're more confident."
6. "You're feeling so sluggish. Cleaning can definitely wait."
7. "Starting that book feels intimidating. Just relax with another TV episode instead."
8. "Do you really feel prepared to study? Studying now might just be a waste."
9. "Do you really feel that paper/report is that important? The deadline is days away, after all."
10. "You feel drained. Perhaps the gym session can be postponed."

By tapping into these feelings, the Dark Horse crafts persuasive reasons to avoid action. Recognizing these emotion-based diversions can aid in overcoming the snares of procrastination.



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## Strategy #3: Making Liking Irrelevant - Taming the Dark Horse of Preference

In our journey through life, there's a common misconception that we should always focus on tasks that we like or are passionate about. This philosophy, unfortunately, provides fertile ground for procrastination. When a task arises that we're not fond of, our Dark Horse sees it as an excuse to stall, pulling us towards distractions. But the hard truth is, life demands action regardless of our likes and dislikes.

Let's look at some relatable examples. Consider students aiming for medical school. Organic chemistry might not be their favorite subject, and their Dark Horse will be quick to remind them of this. However, with the competitive nature of medical school admissions, their personal feelings towards the subject become moot. The grade they achieve in that course is just as critical as any other, making their liking or disliking of the subject irrelevant in the grand scheme of their academic pursuits.

Similarly, in the business realm, professionals might not be fans of certain tasks such as data entry or detailed report writing. Their Dark Horse might whisper, suggesting that these tasks are tedious or beneath them. However, in the professional world, these tasks often form the backbone of a successful operation. Every duty, regardless of its perceived importance, plays a role in the bigger picture, meaning that personal preferences should be set aside.

### The Action Plan:

1. Acknowledge the Dislike: Recognize and accept that there will always be tasks you might not enjoy. This acceptance can defuse the power of the Dark Horse.
2. Shift Your Perspective: Instead of focusing on how much you dislike a task, concentrate on its importance and the positive outcomes of completing it.
3. Chunk It Down: Break down the task into manageable sections. This way, even if you don't like it, you're not overwhelmed by its entirety.
4. Remind Yourself: Always remember that success often involves doing things that might not always align with our preferences.
5. Reward Yourself: After completing a task you dislike, reward yourself. This not only boosts your morale but also trains your brain to push through unfavorable tasks in the future.

In essence, making "liking" irrelevant is about embracing the necessary. By setting aside personal preferences and focusing on the broader goal, you can rein in your Dark Horse, keeping it on a steady path toward success. Remember, the mantra isn't just to do what you love, but more importantly, to find value and purpose in what needs to be done. Just do it!

## Strategy #4: To-Do lists

To-do lists are just that – a list of things you must do. If you procrastinate, to-do lists are really good for nothing. This strategy isn't just about ticking boxes; it's about organizing thoughts, providing clarity, and acting as a roadmap for the things you must do. My rule is – if it is in the To-do list, it must get done! My Dark Horse will give me many reasons why the items in the list may have gotten there inadvertently or are not as important. I have learned how to identify the sweet talk of the Dark Horse and ignore it. In our lives, where distractions are numerous, adopting the to-do list and adhering to it can be transformative.

### Reflective Questions:

1. How often do you create to-do lists, and how closely do you stick to completing the items listed?
2. Have you experienced your "Dark Horse" giving reasons to avoid tasks on your to-do list? Can you recall a specific instance?
3. How do you feel when you tick off items from your to-do list?

### Exercise:

For three days, make a checklist each morning or the night before. Remember to be specific and follow the given principles. At the end of each day, review your list. Reflect on what you achieved, what you missed, and how you felt having the tasks mapped out in front of you.

## Strategy #5: Thinking the Opposite

We all have moments when our Dark Horse suggests we deviate from our goals and indulge in procrastination. A powerful counter to this is the "Thinking the Opposite" strategy. Every time the Dark Horse tempts you away from a task, you actively choose to do the exact opposite of its suggestion.

Examples:

Dark Horse's Suggestion	Opposite Action
You don't feel like writing.	"That's my cue to start writing!"
You really don't want to exercise now.	"I'll put my shoes on and take a brisk walk."
You can clean your room later.	I'll tidy up for just 10 minutes right now.
Why not skip the healthy meal and order pizza?	I'll make a nutritious meal and treat myself.
"You can study tomorrow; watch a movie now."	"I'll study for 30 minutes, then consider a break."

Remember, every time you "Think the Opposite", you're not only resisting procrastination but also reinforcing a behavior that pushes you closer to your goals.

## Strategy #6: Clear the Clutter First (Tackling Trivial Tasks to Pave the Way for Bigger Achievements)

In our daily routines, trivial tasks often act like pesky distractions, nudging our attention away from the bigger, more consequential projects that drive our aspirations forward. Think of these minor tasks as clutter on a work desk. While they might seem insignificant, collectively they can be quite disruptive, hindering our ability to focus on what truly matters. By addressing these tasks head-on, we create a clear path for ourselves to channel our energies effectively towards our primary goals.

The rationale behind tackling minor tasks first is simple: by clearing our slate of small distractions, we mentally free up bandwidth and reduce the anxiety of pending tasks. With these out of the way, our minds are at ease, allowing us to dive deep into more significant projects without the nagging feeling of overlooking something minor.

### Exercise:

Trivial Task Takedown:

- Begin your day by listing down all tasks, both trivial and significant.
- Allocate one hour of your day to tackle as many trivial tasks as you can. This might include responding to emails, making quick calls, or any other short-term activities.
- Once done, take a short break to refresh, and then delve into your primary tasks with a clear mind and focus.
- At the end of the week, assess the difference in your productivity levels. Were you able to focus better on the primary tasks having cleared the minor ones? How has this strategy influenced your overall workflow and sense of accomplishment?

CHAPTER N.11

# The 'T' in the EAT Method: Harnessing Thought



As we transition from the domains of environment and action, we delve into the world of our thoughts, represented by the "T" in our EAT method. While it's tempting to view thinking as solely a cognitive endeavor, it's a profound blend of rationality and emotion.

Actions may shape our destiny, but they emerge from the rich soil of our thoughts and feelings. In the allegorical triad, the charioteer embodies our capacity for understanding and reflection. This chapter equips that charioteer with tools to balance logic and emotion, ensuring our thoughts pave the way for action, free from procrastination's grip.

## Strategy #1: Reappraisal

Procrastination often arises from our inner "Dark Horse" tugging us towards the comforts of immediate pleasure or steering us away from tasks that seem daunting or uninviting. Reappraisal serves as a tool to tame the Dark Horse, reframing our perspectives on tasks and turning challenges into opportunities. For instance, when faced with the seemingly tedious task of writing an industry report, instead of succumbing to the thought "I dislike writing," reappraisal allows us to see it as "A well-written report can boost my career." Similarly, instead of dreading the complexities of organic chemistry, we can view mastering it as a key to academic success. Through reappraisal, we not only shift our mindset but also steer the Dark Horse towards paths that lead to accomplishment and growth.

How to implement the Reappraisal strategy?

Reappraise any task by following this simple three-step process:

- 1) Isolate the thought: "Organic chemistry is boring and I will never understand it; I don't want to study it right now."
- 2) Substitute the current thought with a thought that will help you achieve your goal: "Organic chemistry is an interesting subject and the key to my future. If I apply myself, I will make it."
- 3) State the reappraised thought.

Common Procrastinating Thought	Reappraised Thought
<b>Business Professionals:</b>	
"I'll just do this task tomorrow; I'm not in the mood now."	"Starting this task now will make tomorrow easier and less stressful."
"This project is too massive to start right now."	"Let me break this project into smaller tasks and start with one today."
"I work better under pressure anyway."	"Starting early will give me time to refine and produce my best work."
<b>Students:</b>	
"Studying the night before has always worked for me."	"If I start studying earlier, I might grasp the material even better and reduce stress."
"I'll wait for inspiration to start this essay."	"Beginning the essay now can spark inspiration as I delve deeper into the topic."

## Strategy #2: Embrace Your Future Self to Counter Procrastination

In the battle against procrastination, recognizing the relationship between our current and future selves can be a powerful tool. We often envision our future self as a near-perfect version who will tackle tasks we postpone today, from dieting to important projects. But the reality is, the person you're delaying tasks for – your future self – is pretty much you, just a day or a year later. This understanding is pivotal in combating procrastination.

Your Dark Horse, always seeking instant gratification, might suggest that it's okay to postpone tasks because your future self can handle them. But when that future arrives, and you're faced with the accumulated tasks, you realize that not much has changed. The same habits, tendencies, and inclinations are present. To overcome this cycle, we must ensure that our current decisions align with the best interests of our future self.

### Reflective Questions:

1. How do you envision your future self, and how does that image influence your current decisions?
2. In what ways do you prioritize your present desires over the needs of your future self?
3. Are there tasks or habits you're currently postponing, thinking your future self will be better equipped to handle them?

### Exercise: Vision of Tomorrow

1. Acknowledge Today: Jot down habits or tasks you currently delay, thinking your future self will handle them.
2. Envision Tomorrow: Using any available tools (like the Aging Booth app), visualize yourself a few decades from now. What do you see? Where are you in terms of personal and professional achievements?
3. Bridge the Gap: Take steps that your present self can start taking now to ensure your envisioned future becomes a reality. Remember, it's the small, consistent efforts that build up over time.

In dealing with procrastination, it's crucial to respect and care for your future self. By bridging the gap between the present and the future, we can make decisions today that our future self will thank us for.

We are the guardians of our future selves. Treat your tomorrow with the same care and love as you would today. Don't burden it with today's postponed tasks. Be kind to your future self by taking steps today to become the person you aspire to be tomorrow.

## Strategy #3: Mental Contrasting & If-Then Planning to Outmaneuver Procrastination

One effective way to tame your Dark Horse and overcome procrastination is by using two cognitive techniques together: Mental Contrasting and If-Then Planning.

Mental Contrasting involves juxtaposing a positive vision of achieving your goal against the potential obstacles in your present reality. This approach is pivotal in bridging the gap between daydreaming and action. By highlighting the contrast, it creates a tangible sense of urgency to address the obstacles, thus reducing procrastination.

If-Then Planning, on the other hand, is about creating specific action plans that dictate what you will do in each situation. It goes like this: "IF [specific situation/obstacle], THEN I will [specific action]." This creates automatic triggers and responses, pre-emptively addressing procrastination tendencies before they can take root.

Combined, these strategies can work wonders. For instance, if you're trying to write a book, you might mentally contrast the joy of completing the manuscript against the current distraction of social media. Then, using the If-Then approach, you might decide, "IF I feel the urge to check social media, THEN I will write for another 10 minutes first."

### Reflective Questions:

1. What are the potential benefits of your goals, and what present obstacles stand in the way?
2. Can you identify specific situations where an If-Then plan could pre-emptively counter your procrastination tendencies?

### Exercise: Contrasting & Planning for Success

1. Visualize: Imagine the successful completion of a current goal and note down the emotions and benefits tied to it. Now, contrast this with the current obstacles and barriers preventing you from achieving it.
2. Design If-Then Plans: Identify 3-5 common situations where you tend to procrastinate or get distracted. For each, create a specific If-Then plan to guide your actions when these situations arise.
3. Commit & Review: Commit to following your If-Then plans for a week. At the end of the week, review your progress and adjust as necessary.

Harnessing the power of mental contrasting and If-Then planning allows you to strategically direct your actions, ensuring the Dark Horse doesn't divert you from your path. With consistent practice, you'll find yourself more proactive, less prone to procrastination, and closer to your goals.

Goal/Desired Outcome	Mental Contrasting	If-Then Strategy
Finish a report	Feeling proud vs. Getting distracted by TV shows	IF I think of watching TV, THEN I will write one more page.
Exercise regularly	Being fit and healthy vs. Feeling tired after work	IF I feel exhausted after work, THEN I will take a 5-minute walk to rejuvenate.
Start a morning routine	Feeling organized vs. Hitting the snooze button	IF the alarm rings, THEN I will stand up and stretch instead of going back to sleep.
Read more books	Expanding knowledge vs. Scrolling on social media	IF I pick up my phone, THEN I will read 10 pages of a book first.
Eat healthier	Feeling energetic vs. Craving junk food	IF I crave a sugary snack, THEN I will eat a piece of fruit first.



CHAPTER N.12

# The Procrastination- Free Sprint Using the EAT Method



As promised in the beginning of this ebook, we will now engage on a 20-day Sprint. So, what exactly is a sprint? In the productivity world, a sprint is a dedicated, intense period of focus aimed at achieving specific outcomes. Think of it like a race – you're setting a pace, focusing on the finish line, and avoiding any obstacles in your way. But instead of running, you're working on tasks, projects, or goals.

The primary aim of this sprint is to bring procrastination down to its bare minimum. We want to reduce those "I'll do it later" moments to almost zero. Now, to supercharge this process, I want you to think of a major goal you're itching to achieve. Got it in mind? This will be your motivation fuel, making the sprint even more effective.

I am proposing a 20-day Sprint. Mark your calendar and start today... why procrastinate? During this time, use the EAT method on a significant goal you're targeting, and apply it to any other aspects of your life that could use a little less procrastination.

Here's how you'll apply the sprint using the EAT method:

### **Control Your Environment:**

1. Assess and list potential distractions in your environment, both physical and digital.
2. Track these distractions and prioritize them based on their disruption potential.
3. Actively manage these distractions: clear out unnecessary apps, set specific "no-interruption" zones, and designate a workspace.

### **Establish a System:**

1. Define and respect your "alone time" dedicated to undistracted, high-focus work.
2. Adopt the "This or Nothing" strategy: either you work on a task or do absolutely nothing else.
3. Harness the power of To-Do Lists. What's on the list gets done, no compromises.

### **Optimize Your Actions:**

1. Dive into tasks with the "No Thinking Zone" and the "No Feeling Zone" to avoid overthinking and emotional distractions.
2. Counter procrastination impulses with the "Do the Opposite" tactic.
3. Reflect on your actions periodically and refine strategies if necessary.

### **Control Your Thoughts:**

1. Engage in "Reappraising Thoughts" to reshape any negative or counterproductive thought patterns.
2. Use "Mental Contrasting" to set and bridge the gap between your current state and your goals.
3. Prepare with "If-Then Planning": have a plan ready for every potential setback or distraction.

Remember, this sprint isn't just about ticking off tasks; it's about growth, understanding yourself better, and developing habits that keep procrastination at bay. By the end of it, not only will you be closer to your major goal, but you'll also have tools and strategies to maintain that momentum in the future. So, ready to sprint?

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