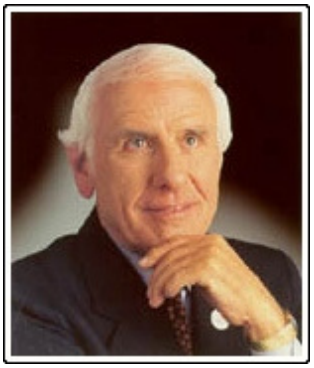
CLASSIC | PERSONAL GROWTH | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ending Procrastination

2 powerful and effective productivity techniques.

by **Jim Rohn**

1376 words | 5 pages



Perseverance is about as important to achievement as gasoline is to driving a car. Sure, there will be times when you feel like you're spinning your wheels, but you'll always get out of the rut with genuine perseverance. Without it, you won't even be able to start your engine.

The opposite of perseverance is procrastination. Perseverance means you never quit. Procrastination usually means you never get started, although the inability to finish something is also a form of procrastination.

Ask people why they procrastinate and you'll often hear something like this: "I'm a perfectionist. Everything has to be just right before I can get down to work. No distractions, not too much noise, no telephone calls interrupting me, and of course I have to be feeling well physically, too. I can't work when I have a headache." The other end of procrastination - being unable to finish - also has a perfectionist explanation: "I'm just never satisfied. I'm my own harshest critic. If all the i's aren't dotted and all the t's aren't crossed, I just can't consider that I'm done. That's just the way I am, and I'll probably never change."

Do you see what's going on here? A fault is being turned into a virtue. The perfectionist is saying that his standards are just too high for this

world. This fault-into-virtue syndrome is a common defense when people are called upon to discuss their weaknesses, but in the end it's just a very pious kind of excuse making. It certainly doesn't have anything to do with what's really behind procrastination.

Remember, the basis of procrastination could be fear of failure. That's what perfectionism really is, once you take a hard look at it.

What's the difference whether you're afraid of being less than perfect or afraid of anything else? You're still paralyzed by fear. What's the difference whether you never start or never finish? You're still stuck. You're still going nowhere. You're still overwhelmed by whatever task is before you. You're still allowing yourself to be dominated by a negative vision of the future in which you see yourself being criticized, laughed at, punished, or ridden out of town on a rail. Of course, this negative vision of the future is really a mechanism that allows you to do nothing. It's a very convenient mental tool.

I'm going to tell you how to overcome procrastination. I'm going to show you how to turn procrastination into perseverance, and if you do what I suggest, the process will be virtually painless. It involves using two very powerful principles that foster productivity and perseverance instead of passivity and procrastination.

The first principle is: break it down.

No matter what you're trying to accomplish, whether it's writing a book, climbing a mountain, or painting a house the key to achievement is your ability to break down the task into manageable pieces and knock them off one at one time. Focus on accomplishing what's right in front of you at this moment. Ignore what's off in the distance someplace. Substitute real-time positive thinking for negative future visualization. That's the first all-important technique for bringing an end to procrastination.

Suppose I were to ask you if you could write a four hundred-page novel. If you're like most people, that would sound like an impossible task. But suppose I ask you a different question. Suppose I ask if you can write a page and a quarter a day for one year. Do you think you could do it? Now the task is starting to seem more manageable. We're breaking down the four-hundred-page book into bite-size pieces. Even so, I suspect many people would still find the prospect intimidating. Do you know why? Writing a page and a quarter may not seem so bad, but you're being asked to look ahead one whole year.

> **When people start to look that far ahead, many of them automatically go into a negative mode.**

So let me formulate the idea of writing a book in yet another way. Let me break it down even more.

Suppose I was to ask you: can you fill up a page and a quarter with words-not for a year, not for a month, not even for a week, but just today? Don't look any further ahead than that. I believe most people would confidently declare that they could accomplish that. Of course, these would be the same people who feel totally incapable of writing a whole book.

If I said the same thing to those people tomorrow - if I told them, I don't want you to look back, and I don't want you to look ahead, I just want you to fill up a page and a quarter this very day - do you think they could do it?

One day at a time. We've all heard that phrase. That's what we're doing here. We're breaking down the time required for a major task into one-day segments, and we're breaking down the work involved in writing a four hundred-page book into page-and-a-quarter increments.

Keep this up for one year, and you'll write the book. Discipline yourself to look neither forward nor backward, and you can accomplish things you never thought you could possibly do. And it all begins with those three words: break it down.

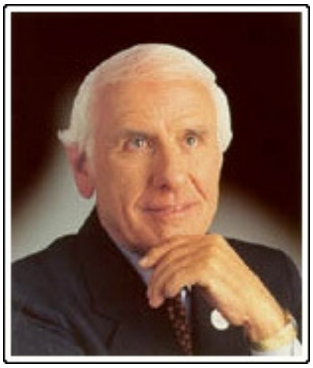
My second technique for defeating procrastination is also only three words long. The three words are: write it down.

We know how important writing is to goal setting. The writing you'll do for beating procrastination is very similar. Instead of focusing on the future, however, you're now going to be writing about the present just as you experience it every day. Instead of describing the things you want to do or the places you want to go, you're going to describe what you actually do with your time, and you're going to keep a written record of the places you actually go.

In other words, you're going to keep a diary of your activities. And you're going to be amazed by the distractions, detours, and downright wastes of time you engage in during the course of a day. All of these get in the way of achieving your goals. For many people, it's almost like they planned it that way, and maybe at some unconscious level they did. The great thing about keeping a time diary is that it brings all this out in the open. It forces you to see what you're actually doing... and what you're not doing.

The time diary doesn't have to be anything elaborate. Just buy a little spiral notebook that you can easily carry in your pocket. When you go to lunch, when you drive across town, when you go to the dry cleaners, when you spend some time shooting the breeze at the copying machine, make a quick note of the time you began the activity and the time it ends. Try to make this notation as soon as possible; if it's inconvenient to do it immediately, you can do it later. But you should make an entry in your time diary at least once every thirty minutes, and you should keep this up for at least a week.

Break it down. Write it down. These two techniques are very straightforward. But don't let that fool you: these are powerful and effective productivity techniques. This is how you put an end to procrastination. This is how you get yourself started.



Jim Rohn is considered to be "America's Foremost Business Philosopher". He's been delivering his life and work-changing seminars for over 39 years... addressed over 6,000 audiences and four million people worldwide... he's the recipient of the 1985 National Speakers Association CPAE Award... authored 17 different books, audio and video programs... and, Mr. Rohn is internationally hailed as one of the most influential thinkers of our time.

Subscribe to the FREE! Jim Rohn Weekly E-zine here: www.JimRohn.com and receive 20-60 percent off on all audios, books and tapes. Also, you can review the complete Jim Rohn archive of articles, vitamins for the mind, Q and A and more.