



.....Last Minute Louie.....

What causes **YOU** to habitually procrastinate? **WHEN** are the times you find yourself habitually delaying or outright avoiding certain jobs that really should be completed sooner rather than later?

Where has that drive to get moving disappeared to??

Are you restlessly waiting for the magical moment when the motivation supply truck at last pulls in, fills you up, and, **VOILA!!**, you feel magnificent and can't wait to get moving?



Maybe you tell yourself you **MUST** feel a special something or certain way before taking any action at all.



Are you in fact waiting on something more powerful than your own willfulness to propel you to take action; a something that may or may not emerge?

Now it's time to **ASK** yourself: Do you really **WANT** to do that "**thing**" you are putting off? Is it really that important to you? If so, **WHY** does it have significance or meaning to you? Is there something you or others will gain from your actions? Possibly a sense of pride, pleasure, peace, or accomplishment. Maybe a sense of gratitude or being loved.

NEXT questions: Do you have too many things going at once? Is the task too big? Are you feeling overwhelmed? Do you need some help? Someone to share the load? Or bounce ideas off of? Are you waiting for someone else to step in and take charge? Maybe you could find an accountability partner to share your ideas with and one who will hold you to your word.



ANOTHER question: Is your need for perfection getting in the way and causing you to delay? Are you afraid of failure? Are you so worried about the outcome that you fail to start at all? What would happen if you lowered your standards a wee bit and allowed your work to be "good enough" for the day. Maybe you could give yourself permission to mindfully enjoy the process of creating, performing, cleaning, exercising, painting, and the list goes on. Just allowing yourself to take it all in and enjoy the journey and actions with your senses versus solely listening to your mind chatter which may be demanding unrealistic standards.

QUESTION: Are you uncertain where to begin? Are you unsure exactly what you need to do? Maybe you are dreading the process and time it will take. Maybe you feel agitated and impatient and want it all done right now. Now, as you are stuck in this overthinking and stalling mode, the mind does a great job helping you come up with ideas such "**I'll just do it tomorrow**" or "**Everything else looks so much more appealing**". Then it definitely seems more appealing to listen to our mind's profound excuses and lies as we sigh a sense of relief (**for a brief while**).



MAYBE you want to see the change, yet, at the same time, don't want to change your own habitual, ingrained habits. Maybe this delay is a sneaky form of self-preservation, rebellion, or self-sabotage.

MAYBE we struggle with self-doubt and disbelieve we have any self-discipline to follow through on our own accord. Falsely telling ourselves that we need the pressure or obligation to another to get us going. Finding ourselves accountable to others when something is due but never accountable to ourselves.



OR MAYBE the task is put off until the final hours because we in some way know that the intensity and urgency of those last moments will yet again set off an addictive adrenaline surge to energize and get us scrambling.

So **LAST QUESTION**: Are there any benefits or perks you will gain from completing the task in a timely manner? Is it in your best interest to get started now?

All things considered, now **LET'S TALK** about taking action. **LET'S START** by recognizing and honoring the fact that we need to be accountable to ourselves. **LET'S CHOOSE** to do something beneficial for ourselves in addition to doing for others. **LET'S BEGIN** to live more intentionally and take purposeful steps that make our lives a little easier by taking care of important matters in a timely fashion.

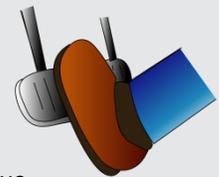


Let's take a **STEP BACK** from the mind's chatter and overthinking about whether we "**feel like it**" or not and call it what it is, just an unhelpful thought. Let's begin to experiment and do things a little differently and notice how taking action and the first few steps can **IN FACT** set in motion increased feelings of motivation and vigor. And, as we continue to follow through on the tasks that are important to us in a

timely manner, we might notice how we begin to build self-discipline and commitment to ourselves. **AND** we might notice how our stress levels begin to decrease and we actually become more effective and clear-minded during the tasks and jobs we initially avoided and delayed.

Now **ASK YOURSELF**: How much energy has been wasted sitting around just thinking about doing something? How many minutes have been spent beating ourselves up for "**not feeling like it**" which as we know only leads to more guilt and emotional suffering?

Procrastination has been **CLEVERLY DESCRIBED** as "one foot on the gas pedal and one foot on the brakes". We go nowhere. We fail to take action. Yet we do burn up energy and create inner turmoil as we sit agitated with the emotional vacillating between whether we "**should**" or "**should not**" get going. Precious time passes. In these moments, we are far from being mindful and productive and yet our mind gets burnt out and fatigued in the process.



Thus, in those moments of vacillation, **MAKE A CHOICE**. Just do it or don't do it. **FLIP A COIN** to help you decide. Then let it go. Take your foot off the brakes and make a choice; then mindfully head in the direction of your choosing. If you do choose to delay, then **SET A TIME** to revisit the task and get started after your **BRIEF** postponement. For example, after a cup of coffee or your television show or by 3pm. Then when the time comes, get up and moving.

In closing, here are some **ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES** to get you heading in the right direction:

- **BREATHE.** Take 5 minutes to breathe deeply into your diaphragm and begin to notice your tightening body and resistance. **NOTICE** your urges to avoid. Procrastination is merely an ineffective emotion-focused calming strategy used to temporarily relieve our ambivalence, hesitation, uncertainty, or anxiety. Therefore, in times like these, we must step back, take a few breaths, calm our emotions, and really see what going on so we can respond in a more rational manner.



- **Tell yourself the TRUTH.** Be honest with yourself. Putting it off is a **TEMPORARY** fix. It does not make you feel better in the long run and the problem remains and even worsens as you continue to avoid and delay.
- **Put it on your CALENDAR.** Set a specific time and date to get started on the task. Write it in your planner. Allot a time slot in your to work on the task.

- **PRIORITIZE your "TO DO" List into 3 categories:**



1 - Essential, Must Get Done Today. (Bill past due or due today, Running on empty and need gas in the car, Report due for school or work, Driveway needs shoveled to get car out, Down to the last cup, plate, bowl, spoon, etc..)

2- Important, but can be put off for the day or can wait a couple of days to get done, if necessary. (Checkbook needs balanced by 15th of the month and it is the 10th, Doctor's appointment needs setup for next month's checkup, Out of bread or butter)

3 - Non-Essential. Can wait several days or even months (Attic needs rearranging, Pictures need put into album, Clothes need taken to Goodwill)

- **First Things FIRST.** Ask yourself, what is the most important thing that needs to get done today? What is the very first step of the project? Now, proceed to do the most important task of the day **FIRST**. Personal satisfaction and pride will follow.
- **Do the WORST First.** Start the task you are dreading the most and get that done first to pacify your mind and to experience a big rewarding feeling when it is done.

- **Break tasks down into manageable CHUNKS.** Take step one, then step two, etc... Reward yourself along the way with praise, a break, a cup of tea, etc... for completing each small chunk of the task. Every bit counts! Enjoy the process rather than solely focusing on the outcome and final result. Enjoy the unhurried process of life.

