

10 Things to Remember When Working with Procrastinators

1. It's probably not about you.
2. They may not realize how much their behavior bothers you; some may not even recognize how much it bothers them.
3. Most procrastination comes from several sources both inside and outside of the procrastinator.
4. If they have always procrastinated, it is going to be hard for them to stop quickly.
5. Procrastination is almost always a defense mechanism.
6. Everyone procrastinates, even you. Some people do it more productively than others. Some do it less than others. But we all do it.
7. Procrastination is not just about the task not being done. It is also about the "non-task" that is being done instead.
8. You are totally entitled to your frustration, but taking it out on them is highly counterproductive.
9. All procrastinators have been productive at some tasks at some point in the past.
10. You can't change them. You can only change you.

10 Ways to Work with Procrastinators

1. Never attack.
2. Address the issue directly in a nonjudgmental way.
3. Have them articulate what has worked for them in similar and non-similar tasks in the past. Then work from their strengths.
4. Have them articulate the concrete benefits of achieving the tasks and expenses (not necessarily financial) of failing to achieve the tasks.
5. If you think they will feel comfortable answering you, ask them for their Worst Possible Outcome of the Best Case Scenario: "What's the worst thing that could happen if this project is amazingly successful?"
6. Break your expectations of them down into smaller, less intimidating chunks.
7. Give deadlines earlier than your actual need and then enforce them.
8. Remind them that stoicism isn't productive: not for them and not for you.
9. If you are in a position of power over them, get them to work with someone else on this issue: a spouse, friend, colleague, coach, or therapist.
10. Always think outside the box.

"Here is Edward Bear coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump on the back of his head behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming down the stairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it."

--A. A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh