

UNPRODUCTIVE



**Why we get stuck, make bad decisions,
and blame our circumstances – and what
we can do about it...**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Fail to Make Decisions	7
Make Decisions Poorly	9
Change Your Mind Frequently	11
Only Have a Short-Term Focus	14
Blame Others or the Circumstances.....	16
Only Take Action When Forced by Time Constraints or Circumstances.....	19
Only Visit the Doctor When There's an Obvious Problem	23
Expect the Worst - Focus Only on the Negative.....	25
Have a Desire to Change Your Circumstances but not to Transform Yourself	27
Demand Perfection From Yourself	30
Conclusion	32

INTRODUCTION

You might think that success is challenging and failing is easy, but it's really quite challenging to be unsuccessful on a consistent basis. It requires several habits that aren't easy to create and maintain.

Chronic unproductivity also requires an inaccurate belief system, poor attitudes, and many years of honing an overall system that guarantees failure. It's a skill.

It's not easy to come up short like clockwork. Those that fail consistently are true experts that have mastered their craft.

The good news is that it's just as easy to be successful!

Success requires the same commitment to consistency. It's only necessary to be consistent at a different set of actions. ***If ineffectiveness comes naturally to you, it's likely you have what it takes to be a great success, too.***

Are the errors detailed in this guide making you ineffective in life?

If so, you'll be glad to see easy strategies you can use to reverse these habits!

*"Success is not the key to happiness.
Happiness is the key to success.
If you love what you are doing,
you will be successful."*

- **Albert Schweitzer**

FAIL TO MAKE DECISIONS

If you're truly committed to ending up nowhere, never make a decision. In fact, failing to make a decision is the same as choosing chaos and failure. Life is messy. ***Not making decisions invites chaos into your life.***

The only way to combat the disorder, or entropy, which exists throughout the universe, is to make decisions and work toward them in a productive fashion.

Try these strategies to make decisions quickly:

1. **Set a deadline.** Give yourself a sufficient amount of time to make a decision and then force yourself to make one. The deadline might be 1 minute or month, but set a reasonable deadline to gather the necessary information and make a choice.
2. **Know your values.** What's most important to you? Do any of your options resonate more clearly with your values than the others?
3. **Know your goals.** Make your decisions in line with your goals and you'll rarely make a poor choice.

Do you struggle making decisions? Progress comes to a halt until a decision is made. Make your decisions quickly and wisely. ***A mediocre decision pursued relentlessly can give good results.***

“Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success.”

- Swami Vivekananda

MAKE DECISIONS POORLY

Poor decisions are the equivalent of starting a journey in the wrong direction. You might get there, but it's going to be a longer journey.

Consider how a few poor decisions can create significant challenges in your life.

Make wise decisions and point your life in a positive direction:

1. **Trust your gut.** When it comes to making big decisions, it's often best to trust your heart. Be logical with the little decisions, but go with your gut on the big decisions.
 - ▶ Flip a coin. No, you're not going to leave a big decision to chance. Flip a coin and then check your emotions. Before you look at the coin, you'll notice that part of you is hoping for a particular result. That's your answer!

2. **Consider your ideal life.** If you don't have a vision for your life, create one now. Consider where you want to be. It's much easier to choose a path once you know where you're going. Align your decisions with that objective.
3. **Do a benefit/cost analysis.** Make a list of pros and cons and make an intelligent decision based upon the facts. ***Think about the short-term and long-term implications.*** Those that struggle sacrifice the future for short-term benefit or relief.
4. **If all else fails, let a wise friend choose for you.** Everyone has that friend who lives a charmed life. Ask for advice and follow it. Just be sure you're not trying to avoid taking responsibility for your life. A wise friend can be of great help if you're truly stuck.

Do you make poor decisions? ***Most of the challenges you've faced started with a poor decision.*** Give your decisions the reverence they deserve. Avoid procrastinating, but make wise decisions. Your success in life will grow.

CHANGE YOUR MIND FREQUENTLY

The best way to never get any traction in life is to either never make a decision, or to change your mind constantly. Regularly changing your plans is a great way to feel like you're doing something without ever making any progress. It's ingenious.

You know the type. The person that decides he's going to medical school, and then decides three months later to become a musician. He buys a guitar and decides to become a professional blogger before the first set of strings is worn out. It's insidious.

This person feels like he's doing great things. He has big plans, and any of them could be viable. However, they'll never be fruitful unless he can stick with the plan.

Stick with your decisions using these methods:

1. **Realize how ineffective it is to change your mind constantly.** It's no different than starting in St. Louis, driving three hours toward Miami, then three hours toward New York City, and then three hours toward

Dallas. Where do you end up? Not a place you planned to go, and not somewhere you want to be.

2. **Make a habit of following through.** It's easier to maintain bigger decisions if you maintain your smaller decisions. Follow through on your plans to meet your friends. When you clean the garage, clean the entire garage. Wash all of the dishes, even the crusty frying pan. Avoid leaving it until morning.
3. **Imagine a positive outcome. *When you're feeling bogged down, it's because the present is uncomfortable.*** Turn your attention to the ideal outcome. The doubt and frustration you're feeling will melt away.
4. **Stay grounded in the present.** You can only change your mind if your mind starts to wander. Pay attention to today. Avoid looking ahead at all the work that lies in the future. Successfully manage each day as it comes.

It's not necessary to make perfect decisions. Many decisions can work out well if you stick with them.

Persistence is an invaluable quality. Make your decisions

quickly and wisely. Most importantly, avoid changing your mind unnecessarily.

"Desire is the key to motivation, but it's determination and commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of your goal - a commitment to excellence - that will enable you to attain the success you seek."

- Mario Andretti

ONLY HAVE A SHORT-TERM FOCUS

Is it more enjoyable to eat a banana split or a tofu sandwich on whole grain bread? Is it more pleasurable to watch your favorite old movie for the ninth time or to spend that time at the gym? One option is much more enjoyable in the short-term, but adds to your long-term pain. ***The best long-term choices aren't much fun in the short-term.*** It's a cruel joke.

This mindset is the primary cause of procrastination.

Instead of asking yourself what would feel good right now, ask yourself what you can do right now that will benefit you in the future. One tofu sandwich in place of a bacon cheeseburger might not have an impact today, but it will make a huge difference if you make it a habit.

Maintain a long-term focus.

Imagine your decision replicated every day for the next five years. What would be the logical result? Imagine eating that banana split each day for five, long years. Will your physique and health be better or worse?

What's pleasurable in the short-term is often detrimental in the long-term.

"You don't have to be a genius or a visionary or even a college graduate to be successful. You just need a framework and a dream."

- Michael Dell

BLAME OTHERS OR THE CIRCUMSTANCES

It's easy to be remarkably unsuccessful by blaming others. The other downside is that there's nothing you can do if someone else is at fault. The best you can do is hope they'll step up and fix the situation for you.

However, when you take responsibility, you give yourself permission and the motivation to resolve your challenges.

It's possible that you:

- ➔ had horrible parents
- ➔ were made fun of by your third grade teacher
- ➔ had a boss that enjoyed making you miserable
- ➔ lack talent
- ➔ lack education
- ➔ are old or young

The list goes on.

If you want to be successful, it's important to take responsibility for everything in your life, good or bad:

1. **While the circumstances may not be your fault, no one else will take responsibility for improving the situation.** You can fix anything if you're willing to hold yourself responsible. Any other perspective creates a sense of helplessness.
2. **Even if you lack talent, education, or opportunities, using those as excuses accomplishes nothing.** A lack of talent can be overcome with hard work. A lack of education can't stand up to a library full of books. Create your own opportunities.
3. **No one's parents attended formal parenting school.** Even if you were horribly mistreated, the only sensible option is to let it go and get on with your life.
4. **Realize that your past choices have resulted in your current situation.** Your current choices will determine your future situation.

Avoid blaming outside issues for your predicament. **Take control of your life by taking responsibility for everything in your life.** The saying goes, “With great power comes great responsibility.” It’s just as accurate to say, “With great responsibility comes great power.” Use your power.

“Turning pro is a mindset. If we are struggling with fear, self-sabotage, procrastination, self-doubt, etc., the problem is, we’re thinking like amateurs. Amateurs don’t show up. Amateurs crap out. Amateurs let adversity defeat them. The pro thinks differently. He shows up, he does his work, he keeps on truckin’, no matter what.”

- Steven Pressfield

ONLY TAKE ACTION WHEN FORCED BY TIME CONSTRAINTS OR CIRCUMSTANCES

Waiting until you're forced to do something is a great way to turn your life into a mess.

- ➔ Wait until you lose a job before you look for another one.
- ➔ Wait until your lease is over before you find a place to move.
- ➔ Don't work on your work or school report until the last possible moment.
- ➔ Don't pack for a trip until the last possible second.
- ➔ Avoid buying an anniversary gift until that day.

It's a wonderful way to make your life much more difficult. You earn extra points for this one in the game of becoming as ineffective as possible.

There are several issues with procrastinating:

1. **You can't find the most elegant solution.** You can find a great job if you give yourself enough time. You can study for the big exam properly, given enough time. You can't do either nearly as well by waiting until you're out of time. The best solutions require time and thought. ***You're limiting your resources when you wait.***
2. **You can't predict the outcome.** Discovering that you're out of clean socks five minutes before you have to drive to the airport isn't fun. You can't predict what you'll need until you get started.
3. **You lose control.** No one wants to procrastinate. Each time we do it, we swear we'll never do it again. It's frustrating. Things can quickly get out of control when procrastination becomes a habit.
4. **It's stressful.** Forced action is stressful. It's uncomfortable, and too much stress lowers performance.
5. **Your options are limited.** If you wait too long, you're often put a situation that requires taking whatever life hands you.

Procrastination has numerous disadvantages. **Avoiding your responsibilities eventually leads to disaster.**

When one strategy doesn't work, consider doing the opposite! It's possible to control yourself and get used to working before time pressure arrives. It's a skill you can practice. You'll get better at it the more you do it.

Take action and take control:

1. **Give yourself plenty of time.** Consider the worst scenario and give yourself that much time, at least. Get started. There's no advantage to putting it off.
2. **Remind yourself that you can relax after you've finished.** It's much more effective than doing nothing and worrying now, only to worry even more while you're trying to complete the task. Do your work and then enjoy the downtime.
3. **Remember all the damage you've caused by procrastinating in the past.** Avoid repeating your mistakes.

Imagine how nice it would be to do your best work without some type of threat hanging over your head.

Take action before it's necessary. You don't need the adrenaline of chaos to motivate you.

“Being in control of your life and having realistic expectations about your day-to-day challenges are the keys to stress management, which is perhaps the most important ingredient to living a happy, healthy and rewarding life.”

- Marilu Henner

ONLY VISIT THE DOCTOR WHEN THERE'S AN OBVIOUS PROBLEM

It's much easier to be unproductive when your health is poor. When your ability to move, breathe, and think is impaired, productivity can be seriously limited. It works even better when you're constantly worried about your poor health.

You might feel great, but many ailments don't present symptoms:

1. **Hypertension.** High blood pressure isn't noticeable until it's extremely high. You can feel 100% normal with blood pressure high enough to cause significant damage. Check your blood pressure regularly.
2. **Diabetes.** Sure, there are symptoms. However, those symptoms only appear at very high levels of blood sugar. You can have a problem for years before the symptoms appear.
3. **High cholesterol.** Whether your cholesterol is very high or very low, you'll still feel the same.

These are just a few, simple examples. Many other medical conditions don't present obvious symptoms.

The most effective way to maintain your health is to be proactive. **Get a regular check-up with your physician regardless of how you feel.** Think of it as an oil change for your body. You allow an expert to work on your car. Let an expert work on your body, too

"Three grand essentials to happiness in this life are something to do, something to love, and something to hope for."

- Joseph Addison

EXPECT THE WORST - FOCUS ONLY ON THE NEGATIVE

Productivity requires action. **One of the most effective ways to limit your activity is to focus on negative outcomes.** If you're thinking about asking out the attractive woman at the bank, imagine her laughing at you and telling her friends about it. Or imagine your business idea resulting in bankruptcy and homelessness. That's a sure way to ensure you don't do anything!

We all attempt to predict the future when making decisions. You employ this strategy even when you're looking for a snack. You consider your options and imagine how you'll feel while you're eating it.

The truth is that many outcomes can't be predicted. The only way to know the truth is to try.

Avoid assuming that the worst will happen:

1. **Consider the real risk.** In many cases, the only risk is to the ego. This isn't a real risk. Consider the risk and decide if you can handle it.

2. **Focus on positive outcomes.** Once you've decided that the risk is manageable, imagine a positive outcome. When the future is appealing, you don't have to motivate yourself or force yourself to take action. It will happen automatically.

▶ Visualize success on a daily basis.

3. **Reward yourself for any positive movement.** Even the smallest step forward is worthy of celebration.

How your brain views the future has a major impact on your motivation and actions. **Maintain a positive image of the future, and your motivation will remain high.**

Negative expectations, on the other hand, will take all of the wind out of your sails.

"Transformation is a process, and as life happens there are tons of ups and downs. It's a journey of discovery - there are moments on mountaintops and moments in deep valleys of despair."

- Rick Warren

HAVE A DESIRE TO CHANGE YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES BUT NOT TO TRANSFORM YOURSELF

Who wouldn't like to lose weight or earn \$1 million? It sounds great! ***There's a big difference between wanting to change your life and the willingness to change yourself.***

Unfortunately, the former doesn't happen without the latter. Changing yourself is significant work.

You might want to lose 25 pounds, but are you willing to:

- ➔ Eat in a healthy manner
- ➔ Exercise regularly
- ➔ Live a healthy lifestyle
- ➔ Monitor your weight regularly

It's easy to want better things in life. It's much more challenging to transform yourself in ways that invite those better things into your life.

Making significant changes in your circumstances requires changing yourself and your habits:

1. **Ask yourself what type of person you need to become in order to achieve the results you desire.**
How will your priorities change?
2. **Determine which habits you want to drop.** If you want to be rich, foolish spending might have to become a thing of the past. ***Look at all your habits and determine which ones are holding you back.***
3. **Determine which habits you want to add.** Look at others who are already successful in the ways you wish to be successful. Emulate their positive habits. What can you do each day that will ensure your success?
4. **Change slowly.** It's tempting to make a lot of changes quickly, but this rarely works. A few small changes each week are all that you need. Build on the previous week's success. ***A few, simple habits can provide astonishing results.***

Transforming yourself is hard work. Making a significant change in your circumstances also requires making a significant change in yourself. Become the person that

deserves the success you seek. After that, everything is easy.

"Most people give up just when they're about to achieve success. They quit on the one yard line. They give up at the last minute of the game one foot from a winning touchdown."

- Ross Perot

DEMAND PERFECTION FROM YOURSELF

An effective way to paralyze yourself is to demand perfection. Perfect outcomes are impossible. ***Demanding perfection also results in anxiety and negative thinking.*** If there's only one particular way to be successful, everything else is failure. When you expect failure, you won't take action.

Demanding perfection isn't useful if your goal is success.

Stop demanding perfection from yourself with these strategies:

1. **Stop worrying about the opinions of others. *Your drive to be perfect is likely tied to your need to impress others.*** Let this need go! The most important person to impress is yourself.
2. **Focus on being effective and practical instead of perfect.** In school, 90% looks as good on the report card as 100%. Life is no different. A 90% success rate is more than enough to have an amazing life.

Embrace imperfection. It's the natural state of all human beings. Be proud that you completed your task at a high level. **Perfectionism destroys productivity.** Learn from your mistakes and move on.

"Why, when we know that there's no such thing as perfect, do most of us spend an incredible amount of time and energy trying to be everything to everyone? Is it that we really admire perfection? No - the truth is that we are actually drawn to people who are real and down-to-earth. We love authenticity and we know that life is messy and imperfect."

- Brene Brown

CONCLUSION

There are many ways to render yourself ineffective. **A lack of direction and decisiveness are two of the primary culprits that foster ineffectiveness and unproductivity.**

Without an objective, there's no destination. Without a decision, it's impossible to take the first step.

Keep your focus on the long-term and take responsibility for your circumstances. It's easier to blame others than to deal with the situation, but you give up your ability to turn things around.

Avoid the common habits and mistakes that render most of the population ineffective. It's just as easy to be productive and successful. Make small, sustainable changes to your life and you'll enjoy the productivity you desire..

