



lifestyle

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Do you sometimes feel that you could make more of an effort to integrate in Switzerland? Do you catch yourself asking if you could be more productive?

Take a reality check...

If the answer is “yes” to both of these questions, then maybe it’s time to take a closer look at your own particular knack for procrastination.

It’s an art, after all

Procrastination is the art of putting things off – something many of us are extremely skilled at it. The official definition, “To put off intentionally and reprehensively the doing of something that should be done,” is so un-empowering that gives me pause to wonder why many of us have let it become the nasty habit that it has in many of our lives today.

Most of us can be quite creative in thinking up excuses for not doing things that we know would improve our quality of life, like finally joining that ex-pat club, attending German or Italian lessons, or making a dent in a project at home. “I’m just not in the mood – there’s no time pressure - that can wait,” may sound familiar. But, if you’re getting a little tired of that line and are ready to change that tune, read on.

Looking at the “whys?”

I know - it is the adrenalin that we need in our lives. After all, many of us actually work better under stress, right? It is sort of a game with time that we play. Yet, if only this pattern wouldn’t make us feel guilty, robbing us of energy, focus and living in the present.

I Just Don’t Want to Do It!

So, why do we procrastinate in the first place? It could either be because we don’t know how to do something or, that we feel the task at hand is simply too big to take on and we are afraid to fail. Or, the task that should be tackled is more than uninspiring, it’s downright boring – and the bottom line is that we just don’t want to do it!

Meet the little guy

Well, maybe it’s time to meet your Gremlin. He’s the one who often has the final say as to whether you’ll actually pick up the phone and make that important call or whether you’ll decide to do something less important that has nothing to do with your personal development and integration in Switzerland but is definitively more fun!

The Gremlin is well travelled and internationally present, also in Switzerland, where we fondly call him (literally translated) our “inner pig dog.”

Your inner pig dog not only doesn’t like the boat to rock but also, if he senses that you are finally serious about changing something, he becomes quite unruly and obnoxious, doing his best to distract and tempt you with less challenging and path-altering things to do – like lying on the couch and channel surfing. And that’s just the tip of the iceberg.

The solution – “In the action lies the power!”

It might sound simplistic, but the fact is the only way to break away from the power of the Gremlin is to just get on with it and take action. Go on and leave him in the dust.

An effective way of blasting through procrastination is to identify the jobs that you are putting off, listing them in order of priority in a “To Do” action list. Now tackle the most unpleasant job first, before you do anything else. This is critical and strategic. You need to take the bull by the horns. From a psychological perspective, this will set you up for success – you’ll notice that your Gremlin has suddenly become quiet. He’s pouting now in the corner. Everything else will seem easier to deal with once you’ve tackled the worst task up front.

*Contributed by
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Alternatively, you can choose to break a large, onerous task down into smaller chunks and allocate just 20 minutes every day to chipping away at it steadily so you feel as though you’re making progress. Get rid of the roadblock, that big boulder that blocks the funnel. Chip by chip, the big boulder becomes pebble and the pebble slowly becomes a grain until finally – whoosh – it’s no where to be seen. Roadblock cleared - things begin to move.

Another important thing to remember: On your path toward putting “To Dos” into action, it helps to have a supportive friend or partner on the sidelines, cheering you on. Share your progress. Keep them up-to-date on how you’re doing. Talk about it.

Celebrate your successes

When you have your first difficult task behind you, make sure you tick it off the list with a thick, red checkmark and celebrate! Dance around the room; get a relaxing massage or treat yourself and your partner to a special meal at your favourite Italian restaurant. Relish the positive feeling of having accomplished a once daunting task! This is how you get your power and energy back - one chip at a time.

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Is a life coach and a member of the international coach federation. Each month he offers advice on assimilation and integration issues. He’s also here to answer questions that readers may have related to transitioning and integrating into a foreign culture (even their own).

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