

PROCRASTINATION IS NOT REALLY ABOUT YOU



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My name is Jaimie Field and I am a chronic procrastinator.

I thought that would feel better getting that out in writing, but honestly, it doesn't because I am not sure when this procrastination habit began. And make no mistake, procrastination is both a habit, and according to Mel Robbins, the author of *The 5 Second Rule*, "a form of stress relief."

When I was younger, I was one of those people in school you always loved to hate. In junior high and early in high school, I was the one who had the work done the day it was assigned; I was the one with my hand in the air always prepared. But somewhere along the way in my sophomore and junior year of high school something shifted and I began to procrastinate. Sure, I was still able to get high marks and get the work done, but it was always at the last minute.

This continued throughout law school and still to this day, I procrastinate a little too much.

Don't get me wrong. I get things completed on time but I know that if I didn't wait until the last minute it could be so much better.

For example, this article is based on something I wrote for my newsletter. I wrote it three hours before I sent it out to my newsletter subscribers. If I had begun writing it a day earlier, it might have been about a different subject altogether. But, this

is what came to mind when I was beating myself up for not starting it earlier.

I know that some are reading this who understand exactly what I am saying!

And so, over the years, I have read books and blog posts, listened to podcasts, and watched videos all with titles like:

"The 4 Step Procrastination Cure"

"5 Ways to Cure Chronic Procrastination"

"7 Steps to Cure Procrastination"

"12 Ways to Cure Procrastination"

And my favorite title: "An Instant Cure to Procrastination" (which actually turned out to be 10 steps so that was a clickbait title).

One of my absolute favorite resources on procrastination is a Ted Talk from February 2016 that I found when I was procrastinating. Tim Urban's talk is titled "Inside the Mind of a Procrastinator" and it's a funny look at the psychology of someone who puts things off. Please watch it when you get a moment or you want to avoid doing something you should be doing. Okay, forget the latter part of that sentence. I should not be encouraging anybody else's procrastination.

However, to be a bit serious for a moment, all procrastination truly is based on the principle of pain v.

pleasure—that people are motivated to avoid pain and gain pleasure.

And this is where procrastination fits into that equation. When we are procrastinating, we are avoiding pain, or as Mel Robins said, stress. So to determine why you are avoiding that pain, you have to discover what it is that is causing it. And in most cases, particularly in lawyers, it is fear and perfectionism.

As a lawyer myself (albeit no longer practicing) I have the same drive for perfectionism that many attorneys have. I came across a quote by Jen Sincero, the author of *You Are a Badass*, which I think sums up my procrastination perfectly: “Perfectionism and procrastination have such a fine line. You say, ‘Well, I want it to be good. I want it to be perfect.’ But what you’re really doing is not doing your work. You’re putting off showing up and being visible because then you’re going to be judged, and it might suck.”

I think my procrastination comes from the pain of being judged, too. “Will you like this article or not?” translates into “Will you like me or not?” and that is terrifying.

But, lawyers, and particularly rainmakers, have to develop a really thick skin (something that I am still working on to this day), and realize as Seth Godin once wrote (and I have quoted this before): “They didn’t reject you. They rejected an application. They rejected a business plan. They rejected a piece of paper. They don’t know you.”

So when I feel this procrastination coming on, I take a deep breath and realize it is not me they are rejecting. And then I start.... 🍂

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