

IAN RENAUD

**KNOW
THYSELF
AND MOVE FORWARD**

**How To Overcome Procrastination
Through Self-Knowledge**

Translated From French By Olivia Caroline Shaw

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*Ian Renaud
info@ianrenaud.com
www.IanRenaud.com*

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I strongly believe every person I meet touches my life, as I hopefully touch theirs. And in some rare instances, something magical comes out of these exchanges. Without the following women and men, this book would have never seen the light of day. I acknowledge their contribution to my life and thank them for being so patient with me.

My godmother, Johanne, who shows me the way back to my path in so many ways.

My Mom, Dianne, who lovingly listens to my creative delirium without weariness.

My niece, Anabelle, who inspired me to think big again.

My dear friend, Olivia, who not only translated and corrected this book, but also shared some of the most transformational discussions I had in a long time, without judging or influencing me.

And to all who, in their own ways, told me I was wasting my time by pursuing my dreams, I thank you for igniting in me the burning desire to prove you wrong. Although it never inspired me, it is definitely helping me push through the tougher times. ;-)

And to you, dear reader, I acknowledge your courage and strength to engage on a path to self-knowledge and, I deeply hope so, happiness. I thank you for your gift -- by helping yourself, you are helping me.

*With Love to All,
Ian*

A MESSAGE FROM A FRIEND

Earlier this year, I was given the opportunity to help Ian out with the translation of this book. It was a significant undertaking -- English is my first language and my French is poor at best -- and one that I wanted to do justice to.

The work, time and effort it has taken me to complete the text has been a labour of love, for a great many reasons; perhaps most importantly for myself.

In reading Ian's book as part of the translation process, I found myself engaging in and resonating with the teachings and wisdom that are found within these pages. I am currently experiencing a period of positive disruption in my own life, and have been actively seeking out guidance and resources to help me along my journey to know myself better. This book, the lessons within it and the guided pilgrimage Ian invites the reader to take with him, are a tremendous gift and source of inspiration.

Provided you are open, this book can shift your perspective on many things. I know it did for me.

*With Love,
Olivia*

EPIGRAPH

*“Self-knowledge is vital for fluid progress.
Progress is the key to happiness.
Therefore, self-knowledge is foundational to the pursuit of happiness.”*
-- Anonymous

*“No one is free who has not obtained the empire of himself.
No man is free who cannot command himself.”*
-- Pythagoras

*“The quality of your life
is directly proportional to
the intensity of your commitments.”*
-- Ian Renaud

PREFACE

I begin this book by expressing gratitude towards life, and for the opportunities it has presented me with. I sincerely believe this book project was placed on my path to reveal one of my most significant weaknesses. When an editor contacted me with the offer to write a book on procrastination, I was immediately excited about the idea. My coaching expertise and my training in neurolinguistic programming (NLP) coupled with my personal development experience were all assets that would prove relevant to the creation of a book exploring procrastination. In writing such a book, I would have the chance to share my knowledge and expertise with a greater audience. Within two days of this offer, I submitted a plan. I chose to approach the project in a manner that seemed natural — explaining what procrastination was, and proposing a way forward by suggesting methods and practices to foster and encourage motivation. This is how this book was born. Nothing prepared me for the reality check I received a little over a month before the final draft of the manuscript was delivered.

I had always wanted to write a book. Since discovering my artistic and creative drive at the beginning of high school, I set three long-term goals: publish a book; record a CD; be the star of a major Quebec film production. My belief that the achievement of these goals was the only way to assess my personal progress was a belief that I held onto for many years. The closer I moved towards the achievement of these goals, the more successful I counted myself to be.

I turned 15 years old, then 20 came, and 25 followed that. Despite having the same goals in mind, nothing happened. In my 29th year, I understood — finally, I thought, I had found the solution.

My godmother Johanne introduced me to coaching in March of 2007 as she needed a guinea pig to practice some of the techniques and methods she herself had been studying. I had asked Johanne for some advice: I needed to find the motivation and passion I once had, so that I could apply it to the accomplishment of my three goals. I was lacking the drive that was required. While the session with Johanne only lasted 15 minutes, it was a profound and life-changing experience. Johanne asked me

what it was I really wanted, where I saw myself at that moment, and what I had done to bring myself closer to achieving my goals, and finally THE question: if I was willing to commit myself.

The idea of commitment or engagement, which I will get into in detail in another chapter, was an idea that wasn't very familiar to me at that moment.

An overused and perhaps, underestimated term, commitment and engagement to me, meant to want for. I wanted to publish a book. I wanted to share my ideas and knowledge with a wider audience. I wanted to be acknowledged and recognized. Simply put, I wanted to contribute.

During that 15-minute session with Johanne, I thought that I had discovered my ultimate realization: my desire to contribute. I thought I was invincible, charged with dynamite, ready to do anything to achieve my goals.

The year had been good; very good, even: I had set objectives for my 30th year, some of which I met. I knew that with consistent work, I could see my objectives come to fruition. In spite of this though, there was a lingering and underlying sense of dissatisfaction, which preoccupied my mind. I had accomplished a great deal of things. I was moving at an efficient pace, and yet I felt that I wasn't quite reaching some of the objectives I had created for myself. At times, I felt like a fake: I was all about proclaiming the benefits of working on oneself, but I wasn't doing so myself. My heart would sink as I thought about and remembered my past and the number of missed opportunities that existed there as a result of my lack of will. I did a lot of reading and research which always brought me back to a popular concept which I had always admired, but rarely practiced: you reap what you sow. That summer, I experienced a moment of lucidity, my eureka moment, my breakthrough as it is referred to in the jargon of personal development. In that moment, I realized that what was holding me back from achieving my goals and meeting my objectives directly tied in with this well-known concept of reaping what you sow.

There is a well known expression which mirrored my own standard of life and how I was going about it: I was majoring in minor things instead of minoring in major things. To put such energy into the small things in life — the things of little importance or significance — resulted in feelings of emptiness and dissatisfaction. If one could take

that energy and re-direct it into things of substance, things of significance, one would be rewarded, ipso facto, by an incredible richness.

I had become very efficient, in the sense of doing a lot, but I lacked effectiveness in immersing myself fully into important concepts and projects. The difference between the two may seem insignificant, but was really important to me! I was putting my energies into a multitude of different subjects, which in the big picture wouldn't benefit me. I had become adept at reading efficiently; I had somewhere around 2000 emails in my inbox on all sorts of subjects; I had become an expert on finding the best low-rent housing in Montreal, but my expertise in all of these areas left me with little that actually served me or my existence.

One of the basic principles of coaching is that a good coach is recognized for his or her ability to be well-coached. In other words, to dole out sound advice, one has to be able to take in or act upon sound advice. A coach is able to coach well, drawing upon his or her own experiences. If the coach has not been someone to take on advice and apply it to his or her life, the coaching will feel off. Now I knew where the feeling of being a fake was coming from!

Up until July 2008, I had my M.P. — my Masters in Procrastination... cum laude. For years I had applied myself and poured my efforts into various projects, allowing my attention to wander from one idea to the next, all the while avoiding my real inner demon. Like the great American Alexander Hamilton, I was forging the idea of what I thought I wanted my life to be, justifying my procrastination through all of the minor things I was majoring in. I was afraid of practicing and living by the “reap what you sow” concept. Ouch! I had to take my life back and take responsibility for the fake I had become. I had to commit to creating the life I wanted, in all of its splendour. I had to overcome what had by that point become my constant practice of procrastination.

This is ultimately why I am so thankful for this book opportunity to be afforded to me. For me, this is more than a draft. This is a personal journey. Everyday, since the end of June, I have moved closer to the realization of one of my most significant goals. I will publish this book. I will record a CD. I will star in a major Quebec film production. I will realize my true self, with all of my potential. I will become the man I want to be,

the man who practices that which he preaches and delivers, as it is not to attain the goal that is most important but who I become by doing so.

So, it is with great enthusiasm that I invite you to read this book for what it is: the steps that need to be taken in order to stop procrastinating and start realizing dreams. I will refer back, in my own way, to the questions asked to me during that 15-minute session with Johanne and offer my in-depth explanation of them, with the hope that they will benefit you as much as they have me.

I encourage you to take these steps, and I reassure you that they are profoundly effective. If they weren't, I wouldn't be inviting you to read this book!

I invite you to join me on this journey of self-realization and finally learn how to stop procrastinating now!

Your friend,

Ian

Montreal, QC, Canada -- July 2008

P.S.: Now in 2017, rediscovering this book of mine has been mind-opening. Ironically, I wrote the French version during the summer of 2008 but I never read the finished, edited version. So, reading this revised and translated English version, I can easily confirm that the message contained within these pages is still very relevant to this day. I hope it will bring you some of the answers and insights you are looking for, as it did for literally thousands of people since its first publication 9 years ago.

INTRODUCTION

“There are only two certainties in life: death and taxes.” I can, without a doubt, add a third one — change. Change is an essential element to your continuity and also to the evolution of everyone. Without it, everything remains static and unmovable. Negatively labelled, change is often thought to go against one of our most basic human needs — security. Change, or rather the apprehension to change is one of the biggest obstacles our society faces. Indeed, a change in habits often leads to a reduction in the harmful effects that can be accumulated by our insatiable consumption of pollutants. Everyone agrees about the need to *“pay attention”*, but when the time comes to revisit or make changes to our hard-won comforts for the benefit of our overall well-being, resistance makes its presence known. If you were to approach an obese person looking to change their physical appearance and suggest they make changes in their habits to access better health, you would be met with an accumulation of arguments contradicting the idea of better health — even if the suggestions you make are founded in science and logic.

This resistance to change ultimately comes from our basic human needs. The constant war between our need for security and the familiar and our propensity as humans to improve and evolve ends up in a massive internal jumble. This torn state — staying comfortable in the known and a desire to evolve and improve — is a permanent division that has and will always exist. This contradictory state results in the resistance to improve at the expense of security or settling for less as a result of fearing the unknown. This moment of resistance and doubt is tangible and can easily lead to feelings of discomfort and ultimately inaction.

The irony in all of this is that change can, in fact, bring about the much sought after sense of security we all desire. To find or rediscover a sense of comfort and stability, in any situation, change is needed to improve, to discover a new approach, and new habits which will allow for our security. In short, we must change. This is all further evidence that, although unsettling and uncomfortable, change is mandatory to help meet our basic human needs.

To really understand that change is an intrinsic part of our well being as humans, the following question presents itself: why do we feel a reluctance and experience a negative reaction to change if it guarantees an improvement in our well-being? I sincerely believe that the pressure we feel from society to constantly perform plays a big role in our perceptions of change and the idea of self-improvement. Faced with new challenges or situations, a person may deliberately sabotage or counteract actions of self improvement or change on the grounds that they will never measure up and won't experience success. Given the constant demands of perfection that we experience amongst our peers, the fear of not succeeding is so prevalent in our society that even the smallest of failures results in rejection and inaction. This explains why we dislike change so much: those who do nothing do not risk facing the criticism of others, and through inaction can often become critics of those embracing change.

This is where the main idea behind this books comes to light. Procrastination, as defined within the dictionary, is constituted by the tendency to postpone; it is the art of sabotaging one's own projects; it is the act of dismissing one's dreams with the act of inaction, which is somehow justified by rational explanations of defeatism. In other words, this is one of the worst characteristics we have as humans: to put off what can be done today until all motivation is lost to the fear of failure, loss and retribution. In short, when we choose the status quo of safety, we opt out of the certainty of success.

This begs the question: What is "success"? What does it mean to "measure up"? Who and what are we measuring up against?

The success of any project is founded in the base of adequate preparation. It is through the act of preparation that reservations will be lessened, concerns will be diminished and obstacles will be removed, relatively speaking. With good preparation, motivation will be maximized and the supports needed will be available. Why then, after embarking on so many personal efforts to improve and experience growth do we allow others to determine our success according to social performance criteria?

I would throw in an additional criterion to this preparation process: that the implementation, evaluation and chances of success of any project are personalized — by you!

It is so important that the majority of your own projects represent YOU. There is nobody else, other than YOU, who goes through each step, from the conception to the launching to the maintenance of your idea. It thus follows, that it is YOU who judges the success of your project. It is here that I implement the idea of one's own personal rules for success: success depends on YOUR criteria; you measure up according to YOUR aspirations; you give YOUR one hundred percent; you don't compare yourself to others. What others have accomplished is relevant to them and them alone. The same rule applies for you. This idea of personalizing your own criteria for success, will ensure that your ideas and your projects hold their own. It is this personalized criteria for success that will allow you the freedom to fully express your own creativity and renew your motivation. It may even allow for the reassessment and change of your goals.

It is with this principle of personalization that procrastination works at its best. It calls into doubt the personal aspirations as well as any actions you may have taken or have yet to take. It dismisses your sources of motivation, one by one with defeatist reasoning. It disproportionately distorts every struggle to perform, which results in an over abundance of obstacles to face. In short, it kills the project in its infancy and makes it incredibly difficult to undertake and carry out any goals. This is reflected in the notion of *"Do it tomorrow — you've made enough mistakes for today!"* This is a joke, of course, but it is amazing how many people subscribe to this way of thinking!

Fortunately, procrastination is an inherent part of you, and therefore oddly enough, you are a part of the solution. You have the ability and choice to prepare adequately for any successful project. You have all of the tools you need to counter this human weakness of settling for less. The adage *"if we do not fight, we never lose"* is a bit simplistic, but indisputable. Likewise, if you do not give in to procrastination, you will realize all of your hopes and dreams.

I propose a further study of procrastination, to better understand this common enemy. I will then follow this study with a very simple approach to help you during the various stages of the implementation of your projects, your goals, and your aspirations. My first suggestion is that you get a notebook — a kind of diary — to help you collect and record your answers to the questions that will surface during your preparation. This book will inevitably be a source of essential information, and it will become your

road map to help you properly focus on your goal. You'll be able to refer to it at any time to find your inner motivations, and see your various accomplishments.

Choose a book that will work for you. My book is very simple, with a golden silky fabric cover. I only have to touch it to remind me that my life is worth gold.

Let's be done with procrastination. Let's stop wasting valuable time and move towards our goals once and for all!

Chapter 1

WHAT IS PROCRASTINATION?

To jump right in, I have a question for you:

What is it that stops decision, slows down the creation of ideas and projects, forgets priorities, laughs at motivation, encourages the status quo, protects against destabilization, avoids losing face in front of new experiences and denies the inherent suffering of dissatisfaction?

You guessed it: PROCRASTINATION!

Procrastination is probably the worst scourge to our characteristics as humans. Here are its primary tentacles of destruction:

The alarm goes off telling you it's time to get up. After hitting the snooze button a few times, you realize you are late. You rush through getting things ready for your day, skipping breakfast...

"I don't have the time this morning. I'll eat a bigger lunch to make up for it."

At work, you have piles of projects to get through. All of them have been assigned to you, without you really knowing why. You don't have an official due date so you relegate them to the bottom of the pile...

"Why stress myself out with this?"

You have a significant personal project that has been on your mind for some months. If you see this project out, it could result in you pocketing some serious money which you could put towards paying off your debt, which has been hanging over you for some time. The kicker is though, that you don't have a concrete plan for how to tackle this project. Without that plan, the motivation is simply not there.

"Why put SO much of my energy into something for money? I'd rather sit back and relax."

The neighbour, who you are attracted to, sees you at the supermarket and flashes a smile your way. You freeze, and turn in the other direction.

“Shit. Another missed opportunity.”

Music has always fascinated you. At the store, you see the piano of your dreams. A small sidenote: you know nothing about pianos. Your interest suddenly seems out of reach and silly.

“Not right now. I don’t even have the money, or know how to play and I don’t have the time to learn.”

You decide to give it your all. You are going for it. Right now. Unfortunately, you end up missing your mark, short of only a few minor details. You abandon the project as quickly as you decided to engage in it.

“At least I gave it a shot.”

Do you find that any of these situations resonate with you? Its normal, you are one of thousands of people who find that these situations, and the responses to them are common place. People like you and me who get caught up in the whirlwind that is life. Commute — work — sleep. School — study — sleep. And so it goes over and over and over. Life is jumping back on its hamster wheel, and according to society, this endless cycle should suit you just fine.

Every once in a while though, there is a tiny voice that nudges you and tells you you should switch your routine up. It is the voice of dissatisfaction. It remarks that you should be taking advantage of the opportunities presented to you, and that you should see the open window through which life is constantly offering you more. The opening in that window can at times seem so far away and yet at other times seem completely within your grasp. Your imagination starts to consider the “*maybes*” and the “*if I could*s”. You soar and give free reign to your grandiose dreams. Then, society and social norms whisper something else in your ear: Reason. “*Keep your feet on the ground, and get out of your dreams. You have responsibilities to honour; people to take care of; you need to be accountable. Forget these crazy ideas.*”

So, the moment passes. You say you are satisfied with your current situation. You remain complacent in your current state, and assure yourself that everything is good and that there are so many people out there who are less fortunate than you. Until that sense of dissatisfaction returns...

For a moment, imagine that you have the courage to listen to that little voice of dissatisfaction, and that you view your ideas, dreams and goals with respect. You allow yourself a moment of reverie without censorship.

Imagine yourself with an indestructible sense of confidence, and a certainty that everything will be fine. Everything you touch will turn to gold. What are you doing? What are your plans, your dreams, your actions?

You are now aware that there are elements of your life that are not to your liking. You have taken the first step to a better life: you have woken up. What remains is to learn how you will satisfy these dissatisfactions, and how you can act with certainty to stop procrastination and stop wasting your precious time to finally achieve your dreams.

Chapter 2

THE 3 PILLARS OF THIS BOOK

In every good, informative book, the author poses the various pillars of his or her theory, dissects these pillars and then goes onto explain his or her methods and reasoning. In so doing, it allows the author to provide a guideline for the reader.

I argued from the outset of this book that the basis and rationale of procrastination can be summarized in three interrelated claims. Here they are again, to remind you:

- *Change is the result of a satisfied dissatisfaction*
- *Fear of change is directly proportional to the basic human need for security*
- *Procrastination is the mismanagement of that fear of change*

These three statements explain how procrastination works.

The first statement emphasizes that change is inevitable. To address even our slightest dissatisfaction, we have to change that which we are dissatisfied with in our lives. We must adopt a new attitude, and broaden our restrictive and limiting perspectives. This can turn a difficult situation into a positive event.

The second statement raises the paradox that change is actually necessary to fulfill our need for security and stability. The fear emanating from this very human contradiction is inevitable and must be managed in some form or another. Positive management of this fear of inner contradiction ensures tangible progress in the different stages of change. The more negative management of this fear leads to an unsettling journey which may give partial or even unwanted results.

The third statement reminds us that procrastination can be avoided with serious effort in managing these fears that arise with change. In fact, procrastination is the result of the mismanagement of the fear of change. It's up to us to empower our

actions and adequately prepare to face head-on the fear-related insecurities and obstacles that are in our way.

In dissecting each of these three statements, we are able to look at the various principles that relate to each. We also demystify the related vocabulary and the thinking that is applied within each statement. Following the dissections, I then propose a very simple method to fight procrastination as the human weakness that it is.

This method, which in large part consists of adequate preparation — that is to say thoughtful and experienced practices in formulating how you will achieve your goal — teaches you how to manage your fear of change and to ultimately overcome procrastination. I distinguish between four stages, which have been formulated as questions that encourage personal reflection and identify all forms of procrastination.

The simple acknowledgment of these forms of procrastination will render the act of procrastination almost powerless on you.

Here is an exposition of the human weakness that is procrastination.

CHANGE

“The only thing that does not change in this world is that change is always happening and is inevitable.”

Change is essential to humans. It ensures continuity and improvement. It is the basis for satisfying our needs. To improve a situation or to solve a problem, we must change. Without change, we would still be in the Stone Age, living in caves. In an even more grand example, change was the basis for the Big Bang Theory and natural evolution. The universe is constantly changing, adapting and transforming — even now as you read this book.

Change is vital to our continuity even if it is something that we as humans rarely engage in with enthusiasm. Change guarantees improvement to things like discomfort, fear and instability. It also, however, guarantees a loss — every change brings about loss. We do not make an omelette without breaking eggs. The word “*decision*” in its

Latin routes reveals an idea of “*to cut from*”. Each decision brings about its share of positive improvements, but also teeth gnashing frustrations. The trick is to multiply the former — the positive improvements — and reduce the latter — the teeth gnashing moments of frustration. The belief that the new habit, or the solution we get from change, is better than not trying at all is paramount. It is only when the anticipated pleasures begin to outweigh the possible pain that we as humans will embrace change. Without this feeling of comfort, and without trusting in the process of change, we will not even begin to entertain the idea of reaching our goals as the feeling of a lack of safety will hold us in our place. Everyone has limits. Some of us will be prepared to engage in our goals in more innovative and less than conventional methods which fuel the desire for adventure. Some of us will opt instead, for more reserved methods, employing a more formal means of preparation in order to reduce risk. The fact remains that in both cases, security will be acquired. Nobody jumps from a plane without the firm conviction that the parachute will open.

DISSATISFACTION

Whether the dissatisfaction is personal, professional or social, when we are experiencing it, it signifies that we are living with unmet needs. Dissatisfaction is the starting point of any problem or project. Think about it: if everything goes right, if ALL of your needs are met, can we really say that a problem exists? Certainly not. Always seemingly ephemeral, this ideal situation — where everything goes right and all of our needs are met — deserves to be appreciated for its true value. This ideal state of well-being evolved from another state and is therefore representative of change. Even if we were to remain static, and believe we aren’t changing, we must change, as the world is constantly in a state of change. Denying that change exists is to refuse the right to feel good. That really says it all...

If there is a sense of dissatisfaction that has been long standing, change is required to create satisfaction. Without change, we are faced with a limiting definition of insanity: “*Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.*” By recreating the same situation, in the same environment with the same actions we will get the same results, without fail. Hoping that “things will work out for

themselves” really is just wishful thinking, and we know how slow that thought process can be to prove itself. Although there may be some sort of recovery process without your intervention, change is required. It is, therefore, necessary to change one or more things to get any sense of satisfaction. We have to remember though, that various changes we engage in will provide different results. Any change that is created will not necessarily be positive, or wanted for that matter. Change can be divided into three broad categories of intervention: to have, to do and to be. Each category provides various solutions. Depending on your desire to change quickly either in the short or long term, the consideration of the preferred response category is paramount.

TO HAVE

To have encapsulates all of human activity and its environment. It also refers to the results we get from the actions we participate in. The idea of change at this level is truly a Tour de Force. The idea of changing an environment over which we have no control is an illusion. We can try to control others, which comes back to manipulating them. We can change the mood of a room so that we can better relax there, but nice colours will not ease a mind in distress. In order to be effective, the changes made in this category imply complete control over things which can not be controlled. Any change at this level is quickly perceived as unnecessary and not too effective since the results will be superficial and not directly related to the problem.

Take an overweight man who wants to drop a significant amount of that weight. On this level, he can get a bigger bed, he can cut off his contacts with all of the physically fit people in his life, and he can remove the mirrors in his house, so he doesn't have to see himself. The results of these changes will be new to him: he will have more room in his bed; he won't compare himself to others; he won't have to see himself in the mirror. In making all of these changes, he will most likely lose the desire to drop the weight because he has effectively removed any opportunity to experience dissatisfaction. Of course, these elements of dissatisfaction will likely present themselves in different manifestations as he has not dealt with the dissatisfaction he experiences. He will, therefore, remain in a state of constant denial because all of those changes did not actually address the source of the problem.

TO DO

Doing consists of all of the actions, deeds and spoken words that one is likely to produce — it is often in this stage that we begin to undertake change. The common knowledge regarding change, in that we engage in it to get different results, is a widespread belief and a logic that works well. The question is, how do we change? Inevitably, even the simple acts of talking or moving differently will lead to different interactions with our environment which will, in turn, provide different results. In this respect, satisfaction becomes the ultimate goal. If we can maintain new behaviours on a regular basis and keep them going in the long run, we can be satisfied that results are almost a given. Yet, it is at this moment that we lose sight of the big picture: by slipping up, tripping or stumbling upon something on our path to change and improvement, it can be so easy to fall back into our old habits. We must therefore remain steadfast in our consistent path with changes to an old behaviour, method or approach being done on a regular basis.

When we more closely examine our construct of doing something differently on a maintained and regular basis, we soon realize that the level of change we are seeking is perhaps unstable. We can adopt new habits of exercise and a good diet — these changes will lead to weight dropping. If we were to start walking for 30 minutes everyday, and take out our calorie dense desserts, we could drop maybe a pound a week. The instability of the change though, lies in a mathematical calculation. If we were to miss a day here and there of walking, and suddenly began indulging in rich desserts more often, the aforementioned dropped pound per week may not work out so well for us. In order for us to achieve our objective — in this case, dropping weight — we have to engage in consistent and maintained changes. What if it rains tonight, and you can't make it out for your walk? What happens when the holiday season approaches with all of its various indulgences? When we are talking about actually making changes, no matter when we choose to implement them, there will always be obstacles and temptations that can thwart even the best of intentions.

TO BE

Being is a fundamental part of our intrinsic nature. It is what we think, what we believe and what identifies us as a person. In this particular stage of being, we look at making internal changes — some of the most profound changes that one can experience. We can change our perspective, our identity, or our personal expression — we can even change ALL of those things. At this level of being, we have full control, in that it is within us that the change takes place. Here, we identify the “*why*” of change — we look at the undeniable, underlying motivations that spark a need for change. If we can master changing our actions to comply with our new thoughts, our interactions and existence will see tremendous improvement. It is in the state of being that changes are long lasting and permanent. The changes made in the state of being are incredibly rewarding, as they tend to affect our own self-love and self-respect. A change at this level does not take into account specific actions nor environmental factors because the effect comes from the inside and influences the outside. Change is intrinsic and, if maintained, goes on to have a significant impact on one’s surroundings, even more so on others.

“Be the change you hope to see in this world.”

Ghandi

Looking at our example, if one found a greater sense of self-love and improved self-esteem, one will inevitably pay closer attention to his/her level of physical activity and diet. That person would refrain from indulging in a buffet, and would probably opt for a walk or a stroll instead of the former habit of watching TV. The new understanding that this person would have, of him/herself, will ultimately dictate that person’s new behaviour. This will be much more powerful and have longer lasting effects than following an exercise program. The person will influence his/her own environment with radiance and any temptations that he/she may have experienced in the past will no longer have the control they once did. All of these changes of being will end up trickling down and effecting self-esteem, energy, stature and personal

relationships. It is in this state of being that the results of change are the most effective since they come from the inside, without much influence from the outside.

SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

It is easy to determine that the best approach to change is from being. If we look internally, we see that we have access to all of our strengths and resources to create the life we dream of and, by extension, the world we want to live in. It is therefore, highly recommended that, when preparing for a project, we ask the right questions that will serve to awaken the deep-seeded motivation within us that will generate long lasting, and possibly permanent, positive change.

Very often, the issue of personal development is a topic that is off-putting for most people. For example, we might ask “*Why bother asking me where I see my life at 40? I just want to focus on setting a budget and sticking to it!*” If you are 40, and struggle in balancing or maintaining your budget, you need to do some reflecting. The simple act of thinking about missed opportunities that were the result of poor financial discipline, won’t provide you with the insights you require. In breaking free from dissatisfaction, you have to actually acknowledge what it is you are dissatisfied about. The questions that I will present to you, which will work to engage your priorities and call forth your motivation will, upon reflection, bring you a sense of freedom. They will elicit from you the realization that you can actually achieve what you want in life. Remember: you are your only obstacle.

If you can change your state of being, you will no longer chase quick fixes or seemingly unrealistic illusions. The “*how*” does not matter, because the “*why*” will be your guide.

If we look back on our example of someone who is looking to drop weight, do you think that that person will get more motivation by focusing on a specific exercise regime, or cutting his/her carbs, or do you think that person will get more motivation by acknowledging the term “*morbidly obese*” — which means, literally, deadly overweight? Will he/she find more motivation in the “*how*” — the process of dropping

weight, or rather will he/she find more motivation in focusing on the “*why*” — looking deeper and realizing why the weight needs to be dropped? The answer is obvious.

Although the “*why*” may seem painful, the motivation that we get from it is far more powerful. The “*why*” is difficult to examine because in so doing, we can often see all of the “*hows*” that we attempted with no success. If we can engage our “*why*” drive motivation, success is more accessible and in some cases, even guaranteed. Satisfaction, then, becomes a path and not a road strewn with obstacles.

SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

*“We must learn to know ourselves to act better and in so doing,
be able to reap what we sow.”*

THE SATISFACTION OF A DISSATISFACTION

Dissatisfaction is most often what leads us to the decision to solve a problem. Dissatisfaction can be seen as a gap to fill, and the achievement of finding a solution for that gap can be transformed into a personal project. Regardless of the size of dissatisfaction, whether it is dropping a few pounds, or re-designing a multi-national corporation, the result can be found in a brief shopping list of things to be done, or may stretch into long term introspection followed up by a profound transformation. The process for conducting such projects — regardless of size or scope — remains the same.

Acknowledging and recognizing dissatisfaction is an undertaking in and of itself. We have to recognize the nature of the dissatisfaction — that is to say, see the dream and also be aware of what needs to be done to achieve that dream. We need to be aware of all of our options and analyze them, and rediscover our sources of motivation: the ones necessary to maintain consistent actions following the initial momentum. It is this method that I push for and that I will discuss in more detail in the following chapters. For now, we will look at analyzing the obstacles to satisfaction and freedom of change.

To be satisfied underlies a continuous sense of well-being that encompasses some stability. Once one can experience the self-generated satisfaction, often times a linking sense of security is experienced as well — the positive is here to stay. This, in turn, leads to the following principle: to satisfy a dissatisfaction, one must change his situation or behaviour (or both) to regain a sense of security. By logic, then, dissatisfaction is an internal imbalance that requires adaptation. It is in this logic that fear of change can materialize.

The instability and imbalance is what frightens us — by definition, they are new and unknown and directly related to change. We must learn to ride with the new and unknown by adequately preparing and embracing change to avoid the pitfalls of procrastination. In so doing, the satisfaction we can derive from addressing our dissatisfaction will no longer result in negative consequences, but rather positive ends. We need to remember this certainty: the project will ultimately bring more pleasure than pain. By keeping this in mind, our motivation will remain steadfast and high. This mindset allows us to manage our fears by keeping an overview of the project. This overview prevents us from losing sight of our respective targets. By implicitly trusting that nothing is impossible, we are guaranteed a stable path leading to the expected results.

Let's see why this certainty is so highly desirable in the performance of any project and why it is even easier to reach than may be assumed.

FEAR OF CHANGE

Fear, in all of its forms, is our best ally.

Fear is, indeed a reaction to the unknown and in some instances, a reaction to imminent danger. It helps to protect us, to respond appropriately in emergency situations and to inform us of our weaknesses so that we can try to correct them. When poorly managed, however, fear becomes a formidable enemy that freezes us, undermines our abilities and scares us off through illogical reasoning. It is, therefore, important to manage one's fear to avoid dire consequences. Fear of change directly correlates to our primary need for security. As humans, we need to have a solid base to

accept change. Without a solid base, discomfort quickly evolves into insecurity and resistance and pushes us to take refuge in the bosom of inaction. If one perceives that the pursuit of a goal or objective will likely cause more pain and discomfort than the inevitable happiness and satisfaction of achieving that goal or objective, one is more likely to choose not to move. Even if it is unsatisfactory, the status quo, being familiar and stable, ends up being the preferential choice. It is this status quo that provides immediate gratification for our need for security. The situation remains unchanged, the person remains in the known and he/she may quickly forget the deep sense of dissatisfaction, until a better solution can be considered. The reasons that lead us to adopt the status quo, however are often results of procrastination.

Here is another way to see that human beings are naturally attracted to what is represented in terms of security. To act, one must meet one of two basic motivational sources: acquire pleasure or avoid pain. At equal value, the brain will obviously choose pleasure. The brain will be guided by the smell of baked bread, or the memory of the touch of a loved one. However, when quickly contaminated by defeating thoughts, the same sought-after pleasure can be reduced to nothingness before the possibility of pain even exists. This inevitably causes inaction. Take, as an example, the memory of a hot stove to a young child — the child will remember being burned and will likely not reach for the stove again. Similarly, someone whose heart has recently been broken by the break-up of a relationship is far less likely to seek out and engage in another committed relationship, for fear that the pain he/she now experiences, may happen again. All of this despite knowing that a completely different and positive outcome is achievable.

We all have two ways to motivate us into taking action. It is important to be cognizant of both as they are incredibly strong. When we seek out intrinsic motivation, we often look back to past events: looking at the blissful nature of our childhood, but also at all of the experiences which have caused us pain in adulthood. Fear is an inevitability. It is something present in all of us and cannot be stopped completely. Change is necessary and often encouraged, yet, the fear that accompanies our desire to change is often what ends up halting our movements towards change. If we can learn to manage this fear, it will ultimately help to dictate our responses and our reactions. In looking at what constitutes a good management system for fear, adequate

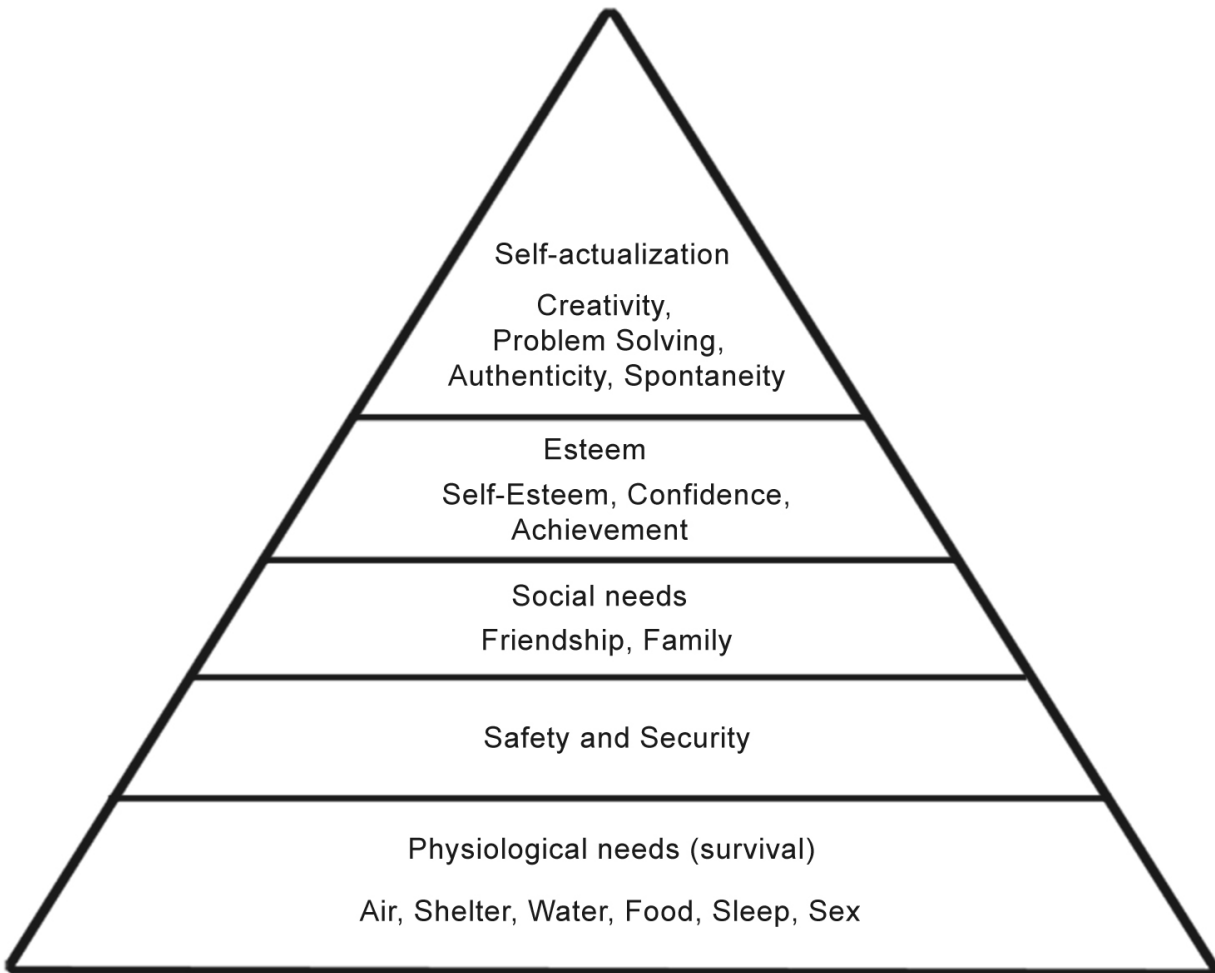
preparation is often a driving force that can keep us on track. This preparation helps us familiarize ourselves with the possible obstacles we may face and allows us to effectively meet them and move through them, head-on. Poor management of fear, however, often results in a loss of energy and time. We will see how these delays ultimately lead to procrastination.

THE WORKING OF PROCRASTINATION

Procrastination is a human weakness that is the direct result of our resistance to change. The latter, change, is essential to continuity. Paradoxically, human beings have a need for security, which is often achieved through routine activities and settling for the status quo. Maslow, and his pyramid which illustrates the hierarchy of human needs, argues that this sense of security we each have a desire for is largely physiological and psychological in its nature. Being situated at the base of the pyramid, one has to satisfy this need before thinking about its personal growth and social contribution. Physically, we need shelter against bad weather, a blanket to ensure warmth on cold night and protection against external attacks.

Looking at the psychological perspective, we look for a sense of security in employment that guarantees a steady income, a steady support from family and friends, a peace of mind knowing that help will be available if need be. It is in these two areas that personal safety simply refers to a confident attitude that everything is okay.

ABRAHAM MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



Maslow's pyramid consists of five levels. According to Maslow, we look for satisfaction in a given level, before thinking of the next level. It is no surprise, therefore, to see that we prioritize the physiological criteria — survival — before those needs relating to self improvement and the improvement of others.

One needs this basic safety in order to aim high and go for the achievement of goals and objectives. Without personal stability, one lacks the confidence needed to embark on new projects. Therefore, this primary need of security in both internal and

external environments is pivotal before one can even begin to attempt to tackle new things, and change. Interestingly enough, the need for security ends up trumping all other needs and often slows down and halts the needs to be contributing to society and acquiring personal accomplishments. This is where procrastination comes in. It reduces the superficial insecurities of a new project; the risk taking, the challenges and possible losses and instead infuses us with a sense of discomfort and instability which can often lead to turning us into dropouts and quitters.

We cannot completely eliminate the sense of discomfort that we experience where the unknown is concerned. By definition, the unknown is frightening since it is not known; there is no association with any certainty and, therefore, the security cannot be guaranteed in the unknown. When embarking on a new project, insecurity and the fear of the unknown should be diminished to a minimum so that one can find a sense of security within the project. This diminishment comes only when adequate preparation is undertaken. Establishing a global vision which recognizes and plans for obstacles while keeping motivation high by also acknowledging the objective is imperative. With adequate preparation, insecurities become reasonable challenges, obstacles don't appear to be so overwhelming and confidence is increased.

Procrastination is the result of poor fear management. In order to effectively manage fear, an approach that advocates for preparation for the various steps to make change, adaptations and ultimately positive results is required. Let's look at some of the possible reactions to change when procrastination surfaces.

WHEN PROCRASTINATION HAPPENS

As we have seen, procrastination is the resistance to change. It can occur at any stage in a project, by making its way into the thinnest crack in our suit of armour of certainty. We can be easy targets, as humans, to procrastination. Procrastination quickly moves over us, starting with simple doubt, to questioning. In so doing, it reaches our deepest motivations and results in the loss of desire for any actions of advancement. We second guess ourselves, our timelines and deadlines get pushed until eventually, we drop everything.

So, how do we react to this insidious human weakness when it presents itself? There are 4 possible responses to procrastination: abandonment, looseness, stubbornness and preparation.

The first possible reaction to procrastination is abandonment. It goes without saying that in this reaction, nothing happens. You drop your project, you temporarily forget about your objectives and you remain in dissatisfaction. This is coupled with a debilitating sense of defeat and cowardice. Often, abandonment is the result of a lack in the preparation stage.

A second simple way to respond to procrastination is to just “*go with the flow*”. In other words, to quit a project at even the slightest signs of fatigue, frustration or doubt. The logic behind this particular response and the excuses that come with it is that time will take care of things. We turn to this logic to find the motivation to continue. Perhaps it “*isn't the right time*” and the execution of the project should have come at a later date. Of course, this reaction has two direct effects: it allows for dissatisfaction to settle, from not completing the project, and contributes largely to the magnification of obstacles that may come up in any future attempts. As a result, schedules get pushed and satisfaction from completion gets delayed. A restart from this point will be even more difficult...

There is always the possibility to work harder and fight fire with fire. When doubts surface, it is possible to ignore them and run head-first into the unknown. Unlike perseverance, this reaction is more about a stubborn drive to succeed at any cost, even if the original idea, goal or objective is completely lost or forgotten. Reaching the goal becomes more important than the goal itself. Again, with this reaction, the results can be disastrous. We can end up squandering our energy without really investing in the goal. This inevitably leads to dissatisfaction manhandling the project and ultimately sabotaging it. The results are clear: dissatisfaction, regret and unnecessary exhaustion.

This brings us to the last reaction that we express where procrastination is concerned: preparation. I don't have to spell it out that I am a huge advocate of this approach since it ensure compliance with timelines and targets as well as proper use of one's energy and resources. It is, in short, a form of self-respect. This method that I

advocate for will help you identify with the needs you are looking to fill and recognize all of the merits of your projects. It will also help you to regain personal confidence in your own abilities, which is ultimately a guarantee for success.

PREPARATION

The preparation method I am suggesting for launching a project is a very simple one. It is based on four key questions, essential for an informed preparation. These questions will allow you to highlight the important points of the project's objectives as well as the starting point, all of your options, and the actions that will guide you towards success. Before going further though, I would like to highlight a very important principle of this method: it is essential that you are completely honest when answering the questions.

This is the basis of a solid method of preparation. If you are unsure as to what your responses are to the questions, allow the questions time to simmer; the genuine answers will surface quickly. Be diligent in your responses, and avoid the tendency you may have to undervalue your goals, and overestimate your starting point. In the first instance, if you place the bar too low and your goals are achieved too easily, you will be left with an unsatisfied hunger, devoid of any motivation as the challenge is lacking. In the second instance, if you build up your starting point beyond reason, making a mountain out of a mole hill, you will encounter many frustrations when faced with unforeseen obstacles. You will have to quickly re-vamp your plan and may (for better or worse) have to start over, which as I have mentioned earlier, often leads to abandonment.

As you follow this first principle, you will encounter two major obstacles from the start: one will limit you in constructing your ultimate goals; the other will shed light on your true capabilities, which can be a rough wakeup call for some.

The first obstacle you will face will be your own ability to dream freely, without judgement and without restraint. In the first question, you may struggle to find an honest and genuine answer. The first tentative answers will likely be just below your real desires. It will be easy to detect this lack of ambition, since you will likely not

experience a strong motivation to act immediately. If your answer is not what you really want, you may be tempted to give up immediately, and conclude that this method is pointless. This is the first flaw in your own certainty where procrastination creeps in stealthily.

While the idea of abandoning may seem like an easy route to choose as you move to propel your project forward, believe me, **YOU ARE ON TRACK!** Your brain has detected the change you are implementing. You think differently since you inevitably establish what it is you really want. This is the defensive stage, where the brain is seeking safety in the process. In failing to find that safety, the brain wants to destroy the undertaken approach. You, in turn, start to think that the effort is not worth the trouble. It is important, at this stage and whenever discomfort sets in, that you find a reference point that makes the experience more certain. At this point, facing the obstacle to freely dream, go back to the exercise of the **INNER CHILD** to restore the creative base of your imagination. You will regain insight that what you now have was once part of your dreams and dissatisfactions, which will enable you to free yourself of reasoned limits. It is much more difficult to motivate ourselves with objectives that are too conservative... and much less fun. It is to your advantage to dream big, even if coming back down to earth is needed afterwards to establish your objectives. By tapping into your imagination, the certainty and purpose of what you are doing will become more clear. Come on, start dreaming!

THE IDEA OF ABANDONMENT

Procrastination being my own worst weakness, I would often abandon projects. Through a lack of preparation or poor management of my own fears, I have plenty of failed attempts and resentments towards projects I was never able to get off the ground. Fortunately for me, even after pushing them away for several years, my goals are still attainable.

The idea of abandoning my past projects would win over me when I thought about the consequences of not completing these projects: because I did not share them with my surroundings, the consequences of my abandonment were not significant.

Without imagining the satisfaction I could have felt if I attained my objectives, I would abandon them before getting too far into the process.

I made two significant errors in my approach: the first was not seeking motivation through pleasure; the second was not establishing any of my own rules of and for success. I would only imagine the negative side of the consequences of my neglect. In so doing, I shot myself in the foot and I deprived myself of an inexhaustible source of motivation. In addition to this, by basing my reflection on what I thought others would think of me, I limited my chances of success by placing a heavy burden of responsibility on myself towards others, without them even knowing it. In short, my plans hinged on negativity and I wanted to accomplish them to gain the approval of others. No wonder the majority of my attempts failed.

I now realize that, for me, I must think positively, imagine what I will feel when I succeed, and share my plans with others to obtain their support, not their approval. All of these actions are the keys to my success. I am now the embodiment of the 1980's movie No Retreat, No Surrender.

Find you own keys to success and throw out the defeatist arguments which lead you directly to procrastination.

The second barrier that will impede your progress, while respecting the principle of honesty, will be to shed a realistic light on your starting point, also known as self-analysis. We, as humans, have a certain proclivity to play the peacock while in the presence of others that we consider to be better in one or more aspects. We underestimate ourselves while overestimating others and, just so that we aren't last in the line, we inflate our own capabilities in comparison to others simply for the purpose of fitting in, or being accepted. Think of the famous fish story, where the fish weighing 5 pounds ten years ago, now weighs more than 25 pounds when the story is re-told. By inflating ourselves as we have a tendency to do, we are only trying to convince ourselves that we are the best. We overestimate to persuade our thoughts that the road ahead is short, and that the steps involved in getting there are relatively easy. This behaviour is actually very dangerous as it leads to a lack of motivation when we realize the challenges ahead are actually formidable. The project, goal or objective will make

short work of these good intentions and the idea of success will sink into the oblivion of one's mind.

You need to establish your starting point with complete honesty. Maybe it will be difficult to accept that your abilities are not the same, or that you are not really who you think you are. This exercise can often times resemble a very cold shower, however, this is the greatest service you can do for yourself so you can see who you really are, and accept yourself, strengths and weaknesses included. In so doing, your progress in your projects, goals and objectives will be much easier.

In establishing a solid base, you ensure a solid approach which will illuminate an easy path for you to follow. Following the preparation is essential. With your dreams ahead of you and your goals established, this method will guarantee success. If we take a comparison to aviation, your goals are your destination and your starting point is your take-off. Without anyone navigating, you don't know where you are, where you will go and you will be unable to see your projects to fruition. It is, therefore, essential that you be honest. Be honest for yourself. No one will see your answers, but they will light up the truth for you. You'll thank yourself soon enough.

“We can lie to everyone but ourselves.”

THE INNER CHILD

To truly unleash your creativity, you must awaken the child in you — that part of you that believes in the impossible.

Take a moment to complete this exercise:

- * In your life, right now, find an item that once seemed almost unattainable, but is today, a part of your everyday life. An example could be a position you have landed in a company, or the house you live in: were either just a dream at one point in your life?

- * Seek out the sense of dissatisfaction you felt at the time you were trying to acquire these things. Remember your grand ideas when you finished university with your diploma in hand or your first visit at the bank to establish your investing power and the banker would blatantly throw you a *“Let’s look at your liabilities, they never lie!”*
- * Now, go to the very moment when you finally acquired whatever it was that at the time seemed so impossible. You may see the interview you attended for your dream job; maybe it was when you took possession of the key to your new home.
- * Repeat the exercise with elements that have a strong affect on you. Repeat the exercise with, as a subject, your partner, your dream car, or where you see yourself being in impeccable physical fitness.

Every dream and every solution to a problem is imagined before it is created. All that your brain can conceive is within the scope of being achievable. What you consider today that you have acquired was only a dream a few years back. All of you have done, you have done with your creativity which helped you to find solutions. Trust yourself, and let your creativity speak. Open yourself to what is whacky, because the sweet madness often reveals our deepest aspiration. Express yourself freely.

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