

Never Get Stuck Again

# PROCRASTINATION PROOF



# JON ACUFF

*New York Times* Bestselling Author

“Jon reminds us that true leaders act, not just plan. This book gives you the courage and clarity to move forward today, not someday.”

**John C. Maxwell**, *New York Times* bestselling author  
and leadership expert

“Reading *Procrastination Proof* felt like finally finding the exit door in a hallway of hesitation. Jon Acuff doesn’t just understand procrastination; he dismantles it with humor, honesty, and deeply practical insight. This book is smart, fast-moving, and full of the kind of wisdom that feels like a friend reaching through the fog to hand you a flashlight. Whether you’re stalled on a dream, a conversation, or a to-do list, Jon shows you how to trade self-doubt for traction. He doesn’t just inspire—he equips.”

**Ginny Yurich**, founder of 1000 Hours Outside, host of the top-ranked  
*1000 Hours Outside Podcast*, and bestselling author

“Some books make you feel better. This one makes *you* better. Jon Acuff doesn’t just understand procrastinators—he used to be one. And that’s what makes *Procrastination Proof* the most effective, empathetic guide I’ve read on this topic. Also, I got this endorsement in early.”

**Carey Nieuwhof**, bestselling author, speaker, and podcaster

“The secret to beating procrastination isn’t more discipline—it’s permission. Jon shows us that we’ve been waiting for someone else to give us what we already have the power to give ourselves.”

**Brian Buffini**, *New York Times* bestselling author,  
and founder and chairman of Buffini & Company

“*Procrastination Proof* will show you how to bridge the gap between waiting and remarkable. I highly recommend this book.”

**Vanessa Van Edwards**, bestselling author  
and founder of ScienceOfPeople.com

“If you’ve ever felt stuck—paralyzed by perfectionism or trapped by overthinking—Jon Acuff offers a liberating path forward. With wit, heart, and proven tools, *Procrastination Proof* will help you trade delay for momentum and turn your big dreams into bold action. This book is both freeing and deeply practical.”

**Michael Hyatt**, *New York Times* bestselling author  
and business coach

“No one can get us thinking (and acting!) like Jon can. This book will help you completely rethink your struggle with procrastination and give you the permission you need to build a life you truly love.”

**Liz Forkin Bohannon**, *Forbes* Top 20 Speaker  
and bestselling author

“In a world of overwhelming productivity advice, my good friend Jon Acuff delivers something different: quick, digestible wisdom that actually works. Each concise, high-impact chapter moves you closer to the life you’ve been waiting to live.”

**Craig Groeschel**, pastor of Life.Church

“Jon wrote the book on procrastination so I wouldn’t have to. Which is great, because I wouldn’t have.”

**Chris Guillebeau**, author of *Time Anxiety*  
and *The Art of Non-Conformity*

“Jon Acuff has done it again! *Procrastination Proof* takes the excuses that keep entrepreneurs stuck and turns them into massive action. It helps you develop a mindset that attracts prospects, a blueprint that drives daily activity, and a review process that keeps your business growing long-term. If you’re serious about building a business and a life you love, start here—then Go Pro!”

**Eric Worre**, founder of Network Marketing Pro  
and bestselling author of *Go Pro: 7 Steps to Becoming  
a Network Marketing Professional*

“Packed with relatable stories and practical insights, *Procrastination Proof* is a master class in overcoming the barriers that hold us back. Jon Acuff’s approach will not only help you break free from procrastination but will also inspire you to live with greater clarity, focus, and impact. If you’re looking to unlock your full potential and get more out of life, this book is an absolute must-read!”

**Jordan Montgomery**, bestselling author  
of *The Art of Encouragement*

“Procrastination keeps too many of us stuck, but it doesn’t have to. In *Procrastination Proof*, Jon Acuff gives you the tools to finally break free. If you’re ready to stop settling for less than you’re capable of and unlock your limitless potential, this book is your road map.”

**Hal Elrod**, #1 international bestselling author  
of *The Miracle Morning* and twelve other books

“When I was asked to prepare an endorsement, I dove in to reading *Procrastination Proof* and immediately began drafting an eloquent set of sentences to share how profoundly Jon’s writing impacted me and can impact you. Then, after a great start, I put it off. But what happens in *Procrastination Proof* is Jon Acuff presents the reason for our delays, what we need to do to address our inclination toward procrastination, and how we can all consistently cross the finish line of any project or task.”

**Greg Sankey**, commissioner of the Southeastern Conference

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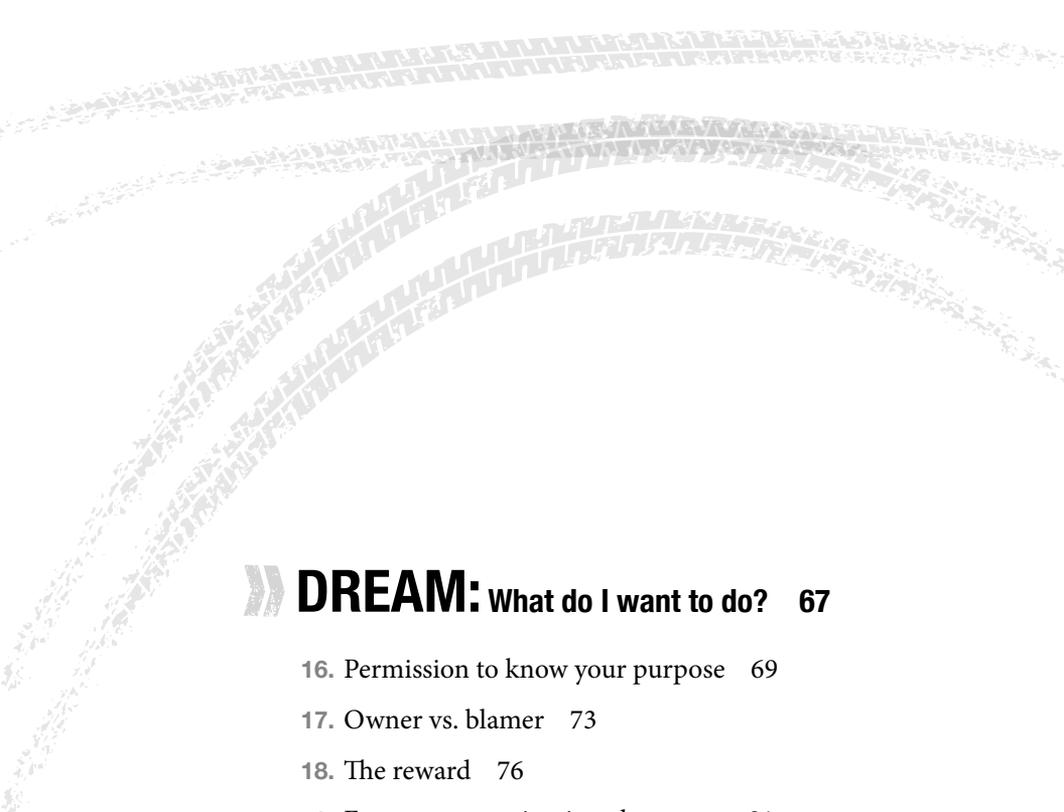
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**To Jenny, always.**

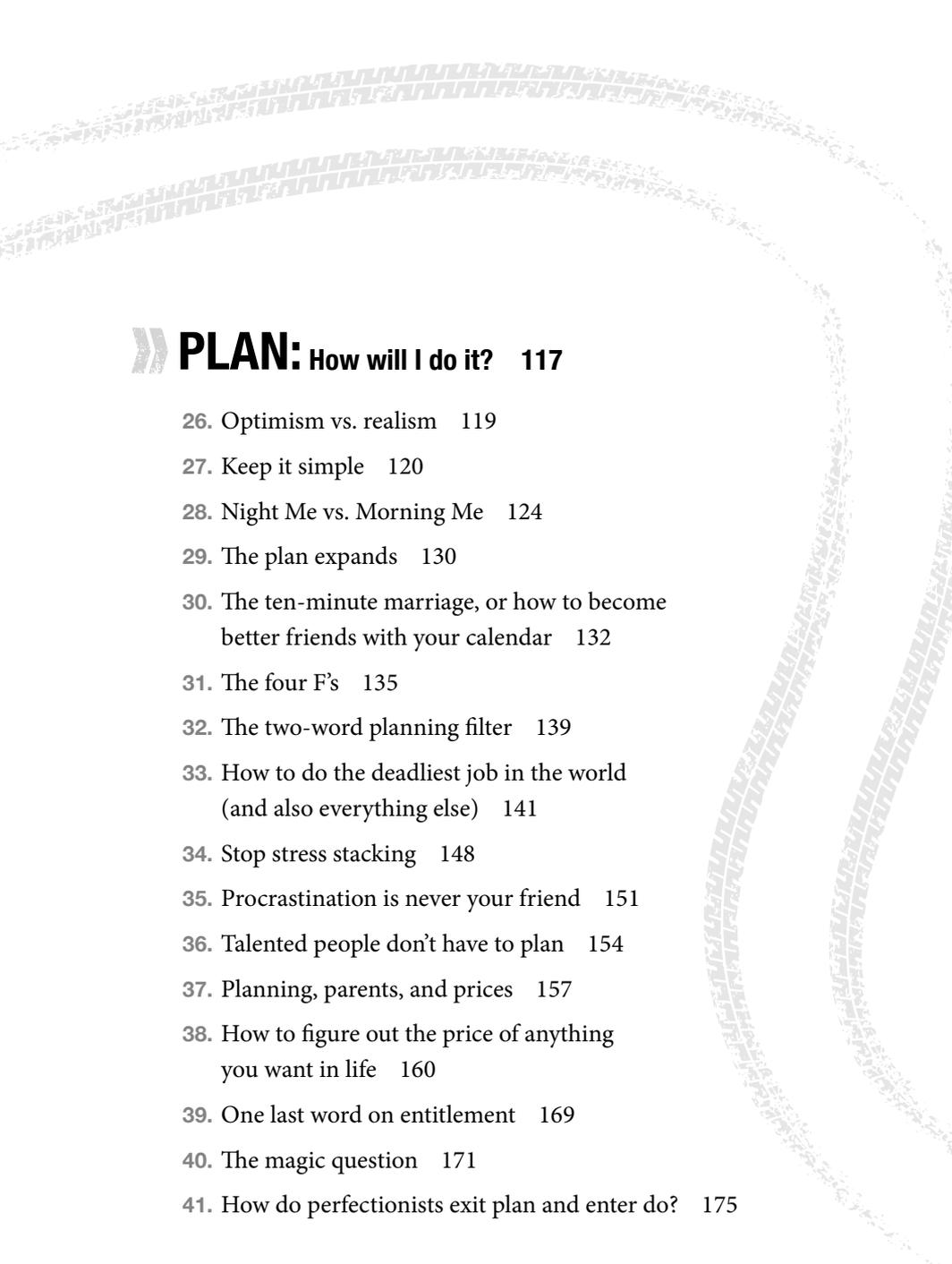
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## A beginning of sorts

I don't know where to start.

If you've ever procrastinated, you've thought that too.

I'd begin right this second, I'd be brave and bold, if I could just figure out which door to open first. This project, this task, this conversation, this everything has a thousand possible entrances, and they all look like they could be "the one."

Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever had the sense that you were waiting for something?

If you could travel back in time and peek inside my tired, black Toyota 4Runner as it slowly crawled in Nashville traffic, that's where you would find me waiting. There I was in Old Navy khakis, a woven leather belt from Express, and a haircut from Sport Clips (because I have a very athletic head). Oddly enough, you'd probably catch me singing to myself in the car. Though Robin Thicke and Pharrell were sweeping the nation with "Blurred Lines," that was not the tune I was carrying back then. Mine was more of a dirge.

That year, I listened to Colin Hay's "Waiting for My Real Life to Begin" hundreds of times. Hay is the lead singer of Men at Work, a Grammy Award-winning band that has sold more than thirty

million albums. He was very successful, but I wasn't. I was waiting and the lyrics gave me all the quicksand I needed to stay stuck.

A few years ago I wrote a book about mindset called *Soundtracks*. One of the most fascinating ideas that continuously popped up in the research was that the thoughts you allow into your head often turn into actions, and those actions turn into results.

The weirdest study of that phenomenon was highlighted in *Research Quarterly*. It showed that people who practiced shooting free throws for twenty days in a row improved by 24 percent. That makes sense. If you go to the gym and practice free throws for twenty days, you get better. What didn't make sense was that another test group of people who just *thought* about practicing free throws improved by 23 percent. They didn't even touch a basketball during the study. It was just the power of their repetitive thoughts that made them better. The brain is bizarre.<sup>1</sup>

That happened in less than three weeks. What do you think singing a song titled "I'm Waiting for My Real Life to Begin" out loud for a solid year does to a person?

I don't think Colin Hay meant to write a theme song for procrastination, but that's what he did. The main character was full of hope but devoid of motion. He wasn't fighting the dragon, he was thinking about fighting the dragon. He wasn't sailing the horizon, he was scanning the horizon. Nothing was happening, but maybe it would eventually.

He was stuck and so was I.

## Daily kidnappings are not a good long-term plan

Have you ever woken up a teenager for school? That's a fun experience, isn't it?

Stage one is sitting in the living room and discerning if you hear them stirring inside their lair. Was that a footfall? Did they just open their closet? Maybe they got up early to read some Marcus Aurelius meditations?

You can't hear them, so you gently crack the door and stick your head in the lion's den. "It's 6:15," you tell them.

"I'm up! I'm up!" they declare while warmly snuggled under their covers, which is technically the opposite of up.

"I'll buy them an alarm," you think, one that will vibrate and roll across the floor like a nervous hedgehog they must chase to turn off.

No one ever talks about this experience when they describe their morning routine online. *After my bone broth smoothie, I enjoy a twenty-seven-minute bout of emotional jujitsu with someone who lives in my house and used to not hate hugs.*

For years, the only thing harder than convincing my teenager to go to school was convincing myself to go to work. It felt like a

battle between the two opposite sides of myself. Responsible Me had to kidnap Procrastinating Me each morning to force him back to adulthood.

“Wake up, it’s time to go to the office,” Responsible Me would say.

“What are you doing here again?” Procrastinating Me would moan.

“Let’s go, get in the car and drive to your job,” the responsible version of myself would calmly reply.

“We did that yesterday!”

“I know, I know, buddy. Don’t make me use the flex cuffs.”

“I don’t want to do this anymore. I want to retire.”

“You’re only thirty-seven, and pretty poor to be honest. Stop struggling.”

Procrastinating Me would throw a smoke bomb, slip out the back door, and sprint across the yard.

The problem is that I *had* to work. Every day too. Have you noticed that? There’s no graduating from work after four years. There’s no three months off for summer. This adult thing is daily. I was hoping I would have accepted that after I got married and had kids. That’s the dream when you have surly teenagers after all. Someday when they’re older, they’ll easily pop out of bed well before dawn and mature into responsible members of society. That didn’t happen for me by my late thirties though. A can-do attitude had not arrived and change did not appear to be on the horizon.

I just couldn’t get it together, whatever “it” is. I would have willingly, gleefully continued to be an underperforming, unfocused bundle of mediocrity for the rest of my life, but then something disastrous happened.

I started my own company.

## This is the origin story

I didn't want to stop procrastinating. Until 2013, I was content to have it be someone else's job to manage me. Let my boss be the one who struggled against this rascal Jon Acuff. Let my coworkers be the ones who pressured me into honoring my commitments. Let the building and the dress code and all the trappings that come with a thousand-person company create the standards I live up to.

But then I did the unthinkable—I started my own business and lost all my support systems overnight.

To say the rug was pulled out from under me would be an understatement. Seven years before the rest of the world would be sent to work from home because of the pandemic, I self-distanced in a tiny home office overlooking our backyard. I was woefully unprepared for the amount of self-discipline this new structureless landscape of employment would require. The argument I'd had within myself for the first fifteen years of my career suddenly hit very differently.

"I don't want to go to work! I hate my boss!" Procrastinating Me yelped.

"We work for ourselves. We *are* the boss!" Responsible Me replied. "Quit struggling—you're only making this harder!"

"This is the worst job ever!"

“What are you even talking about? You created this job! The name of the company is ‘Acuff Ideas.’ We’re the Acuff.”

“Wait, who’s going to make sure there’s money and the bills are paid and the printer works and meetings are efficient?”

“We are!”

“Who’s going to make sure we’re detailed, turn in projects on time, honor commitments, and make good decisions?”

“We are!”

“Dear God, we are doomed.”

The honeymoon phase of starting my own company lasted about thirty seconds.

My main problem was that I only had one employee and that employee was terrible. I was unfocused, undisciplined, and unorganized. If you reviewed the first fifteen years of my working life, a good summary would be “un.”

But in 2013 I didn’t have a choice.

Either I learned how to stop procrastinating or I failed.

My biggest fear at the time was public humiliation. When I started my own company, I left a dream job with a famous person in our town. The local news did a story about it. People told me I was an idiot to leave that opportunity. In coffee shops, total strangers would say, “You’re doing *what* exactly now?” with a look of pity on their faces.

I felt this mounting wave of embarrassment about to crash on my shores if I didn’t get my life together. My own motivation to change was suddenly sky-high.

It was a real Bone Thugs-N-Harmony moment.

I was at a crossroads.

I had to change.

What? Everything.

When? Right now.

I couldn't afford to wait any longer. I had to fight my procrastination with a thousand different tools or I was doomed. Desperation is a heck of a drug. I tried everything and boy, a lot of it worked. Not all of it, of course. A few of my experiments blew up in my face as experiments are prone to do. But like a sailor constantly adjusting the ship's sail, I did make it to more ports than I knew existed all those years ago.

When it was time to write this book and I began looking back on thirteen years of wrestling with procrastination, I couldn't find the perfect way to start it. Every author wants an introduction that draws you in. "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times . . ."

This isn't that kind of book though. This isn't fiction. This is fact. And the fact is, if you ever procrastinate, you're going to see yourself on every single page. This book is a mirror. "That's me!" you'll shout. Or "That's my husband, he needs to read this." If you do give it to him, please say, "This is a book about becoming remarkable," not "This is a book for terrible procrastinators."

Procrastinators are not losers. They just don't know they're winners yet. Procrastinators have a storehouse of creativity and energy that they haven't opened yet. When I peeked into mine, I found eleven books, a successful small business, a speaking career that has taken me around the world, a dozen half marathons, and more peace than I thought this chatty brain of mine could ever experience.

What's the perfect way to start a book about procrastination? Probably with a question.

What are you waiting for?

# » 4

## Short king summer

If you write a four-hundred-page book about procrastination, you are a monster. True procrastinators will not patiently march through your exhaustive exploration of the topic starting with something Voltaire believed in eighteenth-century France. You are not a procrastinator if you had the patience to include a ninety-page section of notes in the back of your procrastination book. That would be Jane Goodall writing a book about monkeys. You're just an outsider visiting our community. This, on the other hand, is a book by a monkey for monkeys.

The chapters are short because every time I see “65 pages remaining in chapter” on my Kindle, I groan. I like the little hit of dopamine I get when I finish a chapter. I don't care how short it is. It feels like an accomplishment. It's a small win, and the more of those I can jam into my day, the better the day goes.

Procrastinators unite!

The chapters will be short. The advice immediate. The pace urgent.

I promise.

## Why do we procrastinate?

If you ask a hundred thousand people that question, you get a hundred thousand different answers. That's what happened to me when I did exactly that. I am not famous. My kids constantly remind me of that by saying I'm "regionally famous." I only get recognized at Costco and church, but I do have a few followers online. Occasionally I will ask them questions. When I posted a series of inquiries about the topic of procrastination, the floodgates opened!

The words they used were different, but consistent themes did emerge. The five most common reasons people believe they procrastinate are:

1. Task
2. Time
3. History
4. Fear
5. Ego

Here's what that looks like in day-to-day life.

The *task* appears too difficult. We don't know which project to work on, we feel overwhelmed, so we put it off. Today's task becomes tomorrow's problem.

We don't have enough *time* to complete a project in one sitting, so we don't bother beginning. Or we're bad at estimating and the day gets away from us, which prevents us from finishing.

Procrastination paid off in the past. We turned the college paper in at the last second and still got an A, so we mistakenly believe we work best under insurmountable pressure. Our *history* has confused us into thinking procrastination is an asset.

We are afraid it won't be perfect. If we avoid the project altogether, maybe we can avoid being judged and criticized. What will happen if we try our best and it's still not enough? *Fear* stymies us in a thousand different ways.

We don't think we should have to do this. It's not fair. Somebody else should be doing this. We feel entitled to the rewards but not the work. It shouldn't be this hard or take this long. Expectations become demands. Demands become disappointments. Disappointments become delays. Our *ego* gets in the way.

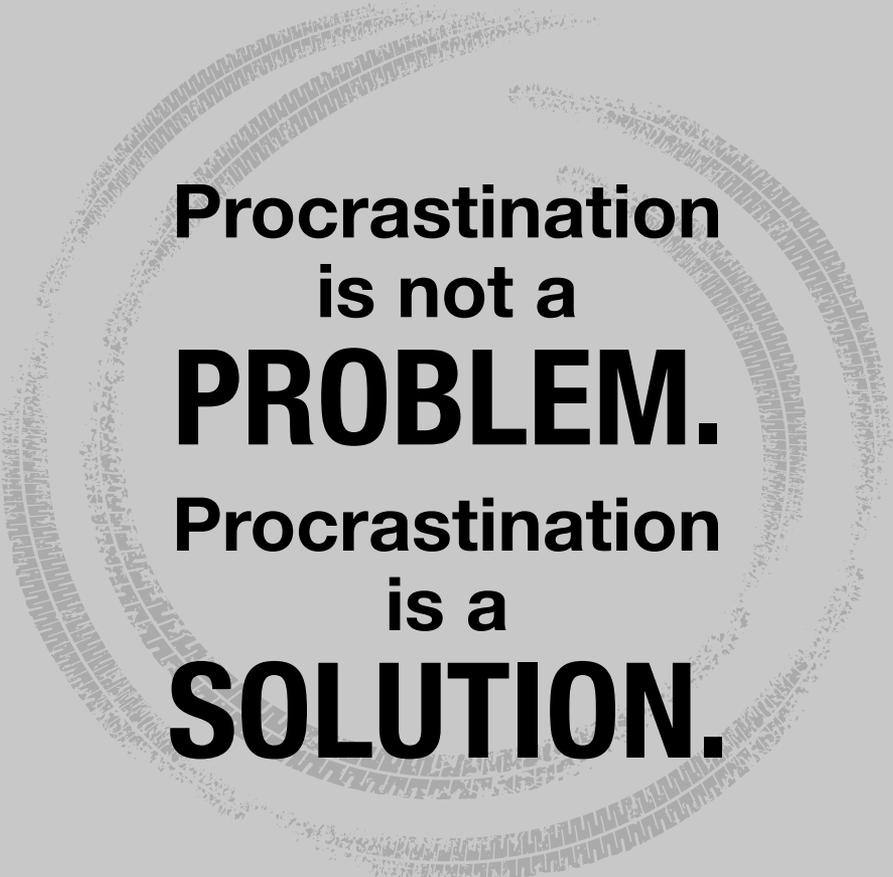
Which one stops you in your tracks most often? I've messed around with all five, but at heart, I procrastinate most out of fear and ego. Either I'm afraid of starting because I don't think I'll be up to the task, or I'm angry I have to do it at all and dig in my heels out of pure, prideful stubbornness.

Those are all valid reasons people procrastinate, and that's a tidy little list, but none of them are the real reason. There's only one true reason.

The reason people procrastinate is that it's the best tool they have. Procrastination is not a problem. Procrastination is a solution.

We use it because we think it will get us out of a jam. Call it a coping mechanism if you've been to counseling. Call it a tool if you've been to auto-diesel college. The word you pick doesn't matter much.

We choose procrastination, even though we know it has negative consequences, because we believe it's better than the alternative of doing whatever it is we're avoiding. What's so fascinating about



**Procrastination  
is not a  
PROBLEM.  
Procrastination  
is a  
SOLUTION.**

---

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procrastination is that it impacts every part of your life. You will procrastinate on things you really want to do, like writing a book, but also on things you really don't want to do, like the laundry.

We procrastinate at everything, but we're only doing it because we haven't found a better solution yet.

The solution to what? Sometimes there's a specific task or project we're avoiding. Sometimes we use procrastination to save ourselves from experiencing a whole array of emotions such as shame, fear, guilt, and boredom.<sup>1</sup>

It's OK that you're leaning on it as a solution. I won't even ask you to stop using procrastination just yet. You shouldn't trust me. We just met.

By the end of this book, though, you'll never turn to procrastination to solve a problem again. You won't have to. You'll have the best solution to every project you care about.