



Finding Motivation on Important But Non-Urgent Tasks

Leo Babauta, www.zenhabits.net

I have a friend who is self-employed, running his own business and doing a great job ... except that he finds himself procrastinating on important tasks like writing.

No, I'm not talking about myself! Although, to be honest, I do the same thing too.

We all do, I think: we know there's something we should be doing that's really important for our careers, personal lives, businesses ... but there are other less important we do instead. We check our email, respond to messages, read news, find interesting things to read online.

Our problem isn't that these important tasks are that hard ... it's that we don't feel motivated. So we procrastinate.

It's hard to motivate yourself when you're self-employed, or when no one is breathing down your neck making you do things right now. Especially when there's a world of fascinating things online, or a million little tasks you can do instead.

What can we do?

Here's what I suggest:

1. Reconnect with why it matters. If you want to write something, for example ... why is it important to you? What do you love about the writing? For my friend, he loves teaching others what he's learned, and seeing the comments of the people he's helped. It brings him joy. That's incredible, and it's easy to forget this deeper meaning when you're caught up in the busy-ness of your day.

2. Remind yourself how much you love it. Sometimes we actually find enjoyment in these important tasks. There's something about them that you're not looking forward to ... perhaps it takes more mental concentration, or a bigger chunk of time to focus on ... but there's also the beautiful side of the task. Maybe writing is a nice time out from your chaotic day, maybe it's a way to reconnect with what's important to you, maybe it's a vital form of self-expression that you don't often get a chance to do.
3. Talk to someone about it. When my friend reached out to me with this problem, and had to answer some of my questions, he suddenly found the motivation to start writing again. It wasn't anything I did, but I think forcing yourself to talk to someone else brings out the problem in the light of day, and the little childish fears and impulses that normally rule us don't have as much power under that sunlight.
4. Ask what's stopping you. When you find yourself procrastinating, pause. Ask this simple question, "What's stopping me from writing?" (or whatever task you want to do) ... and be honest. Sometimes it's the idea that you don't have time right now, but the truth is you probably do have time. Sometimes it's that you don't know how to do the task, in which case you might ask someone else or do some online research on how to do it. Other times it's just that it seems hard or uncomfortable, and in that case I suggest you do the three suggestions above. But usually there's nothing really stopping you from writing. Nothing stands in your way from doing important, joyful, meaningful work. So get to it! ☺