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# You Absolutely Can Tackle the Big Things You've Been Avoiding

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What big task, project, chore, conversation have you been avoiding facing?

It's one of the biggest problems in many people's lives — procrastination is one word for it, but I've found that "avoiding" is more accurate. We have something we don't want to tackle or face, and so we keep ourselves busy and distracted so we can avoid it.

Avoidance, of course, leads to a host of problems, including:

- If we avoid self-care, exercise, meditation, healthy eating, flossing ... it leads to long-term health problems (including mental health stress).
- Things piling up can cause us to feel stress.
- Things not being taken care of can cause lots of difficulties as problems get worse.
- People might start to feel that we're unreliable.
- We lose trust in ourselves, and we can often criticize ourselves and be harsh on ourselves.

The last problem, by the way, is something we can address with the practice of trying to always be kind to ourselves. Harshness on ourselves is not useful, and we can transform our relationship to ourselves by practicing kindness as consistently as we can.

But most of the problems above would be best address by getting good at facing and diving into what we're avoiding.

## Imagine Being Good at Tackling What You're Avoiding

Let's imagine that you spend 6 months really working on this skill of taking on what you're avoiding.

You work every day to pick at least one thing you're avoiding, and you face it head on. You learn to even relish this tackling of hard things. You develop a fearlessness to be with whatever you fear.

What would it be like? If you're like most people, you'd completely transform the way you operate in the world.

You'd take on the hard tasks. You'd plow through the hard projects. You would be good at habits and taking care of yourself. You might get a lot healthier, a lot more productive, a lot bolder and more confident.

For most people, this would be incredibly powerful. All it takes is daily practice.

## The Daily Practice of Taking on What You're Avoiding

The first thing to do is to make a list. Let's call it the Crap I'm Avoiding List.

Put everything you've been avoiding on the list. A big project, an email you haven't responded to, your taxes and other finances, going to the doctor to get that thing checked out, calling your mom, having a difficult conversation, catching up on messages, cleaning out the garage, meditating, going for a run.

Look at this list, the Crap I'm Avoiding List. How does each item make you feel? What do they trigger in you? A big part of why we avoid things is because we don't want to feel the fear and overwhelm these items trigger in us. Not anymore — we're going to feel it all!

So once you've done that, here's the daily practice:

1. Pick one thing on the list for today. Ideally, it's the biggest thing that you've been avoiding — the most important thing. However, if that is absolutely too hard right now, and there's no way you'll do it ... then pick the biggest thing that you will actually do. Even a small thing, like an errand. The key is to pick something you'll actually be able to do. I recommend choosing this item the evening before, actually, so you'll be ready to do it the next day.

2. Tackle it as early as possible. Ideally, you'll block off a chunk of time to do it — let's say 8-8:30 am. But if not, just do it as early in the day as you possibly can. For example, when you wake up, maybe you use the bathroom, get ready, check your email and messages. Well, right after all of that, tackle the item you chose. Resist the urge to delay starting.
3. Let yourself feel the fear for a moment. Pause at the beginning and feel the uncertainty, fear, overwhelm from this task. Let yourself feel it in your body, as a sensation. With practice, we can become intimate with our fear, open to being with it, instead of needing to run from it. We can courageously allow ourselves to *feel* the fear, rather than avoiding feeling.
4. Now dive in. After feeling, it's time for action. Remember why you're doing this — is it to make your life better? To serve people? To reduce stress? To make someone happier? To survive? Remember the bigger Why, and then take the first step. Write one sentence of that email response you've been putting off. Put away one item from the cluttered garage you want to clear out. Take one small action, then another.
5. Notice that your world hasn't collapsed. It can be easy to feel overwhelmed, even panicky, when we face a task we've been avoiding. But as you do it, notice that you're completely fine. You're still alive, the world hasn't crumbled, you aren't in mortal danger. You're tackling the task and you're OK. You might be still feeling the fear or overwhelm, but it's nothing to panic about. You can feel the fear, do the action, and nothing bad happens. You're being courageous, and you should celebrate that!

Keep at it, for at least a few minutes. Maybe 5-10 minutes. Maybe 20-30 minutes. See if you can do it for a little longer than you think you can — if you feel like stopping, let yourself do it a little longer than that. Maybe do that twice — you feel like quitting, but you keep going — before allowing yourself to stop on the third time you have the urge to quit. This trains you to push into discomfort a little more than you think you can, without it being too crazy.

Practice this at least once a day. If you feel like you have extra energy and courage, practice it 2-3 times in a day. But once a day, at the least. With this kind of practice, you'll get so good at facing what you're avoiding, that your entire life will start to transform.

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