

Being Proactive



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A ACTION
C CHANGES
T THINGS



Audience Poll Question

What are “power skills”? (Single response)

- Technical skills
- Specialist skills
- Human skills
- Hard skills
- Soft skills

POWER SKILLS

Using an analysis of more than 21 million job ads from the US, UK, Canada and Australia, Pearson's Skills Outlook identifies today's new 'power skills' – those capabilities now powering the world's economy and individual careers.



POWER SKILLS

Collaboration



Customer Focus



Personal Learning



Achievement Focus



Cultural and Social



Intelligence

Reflection:

How does being proactive support these skills?

BEING PROACTIVE

What we'll be covering today:



Segment 1: Why being proactive is a crucial skill in today's world

Segment 2: The locus of control

Segment 3: Managing procrastination and stress

Segment 4: Taking on challenges

Segment 5: Boosting your proactivity every day



Segment 1 – Why being proactive is a crucial skill in today’s world

What does “being proactive” mean?

Why this is a skill **highly** valued by employers

The difference between being proactive and reactive

Being truly proactive – take responsibility for every single action

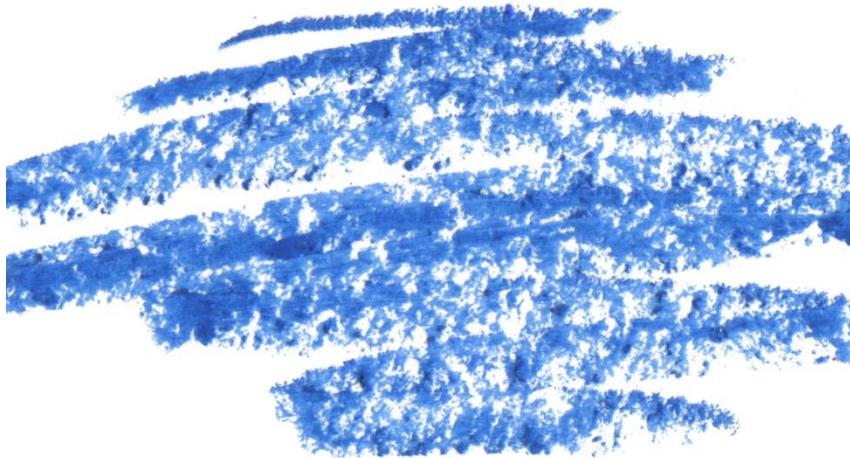


WHAT DOES “BEING PROACTIVE” MEAN TO YOU?



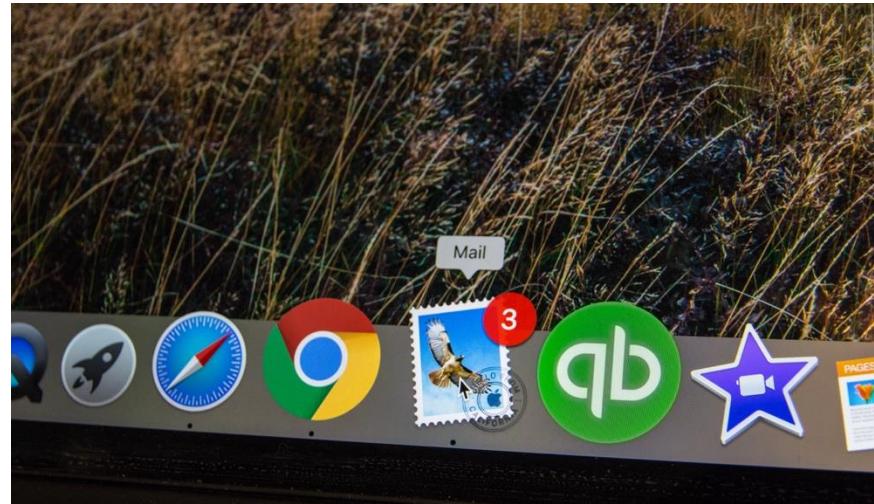
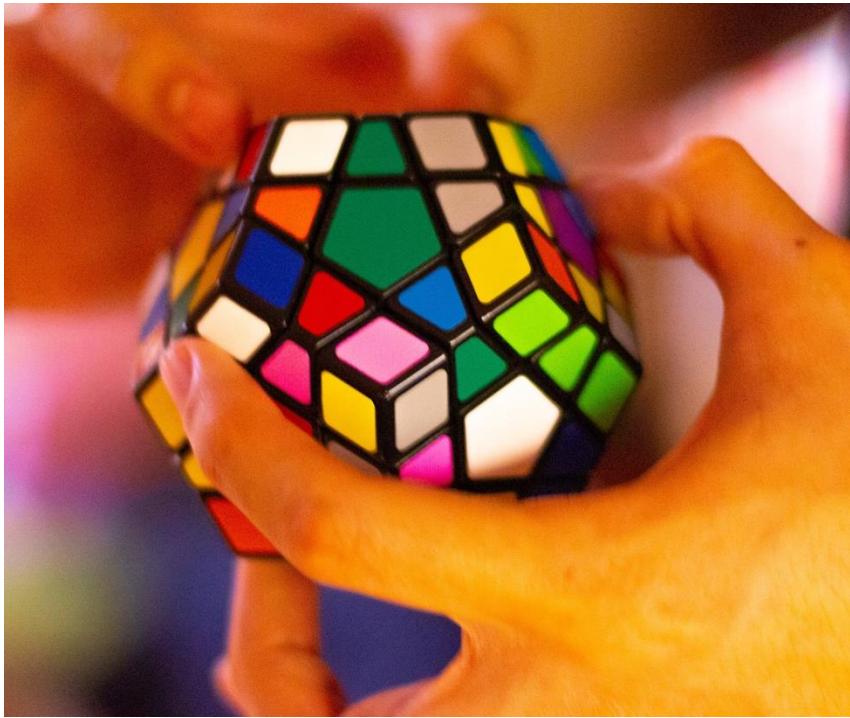
Pearson

BEING PROACTIVE means...



- Taking responsibility for your life
- Thinking ahead
- Anticipating problems
- Working towards your goals
- Placing focus into what you **can** control
- Seeking solutions
- Being self-aware
- Being **responsive** rather than reactive
- Taking the initiative
- Moving **TOWARDS**

TWO ASPECTS OF BEING PROACTIVE



Long-term and strategic

Short-term and more immediate

REFLECTION

When it comes to being proactive in YOUR life – what do you struggle with most?

Simply make a note of this or type it into the chat – we will pick up on these later in the session.



TRAITS AND CHARACTERISTICS

be
active/take
action

build self-
awareness

build self-
confidence

be willing to
try different
approaches

nurture
optimism
skills

think
beyond
the short-
term

practise
self-
control

hone
being
focused

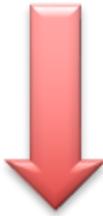
learn
from
criticism

be
flexible

**ACTIVELY BUILD AND NURTURE
ALL OF THESE!**

WHY IS THIS SKILL SO HIGHLY VALUED BY EMPLOYERS?

*Proactive people are better performers,
contributors, and innovators.*

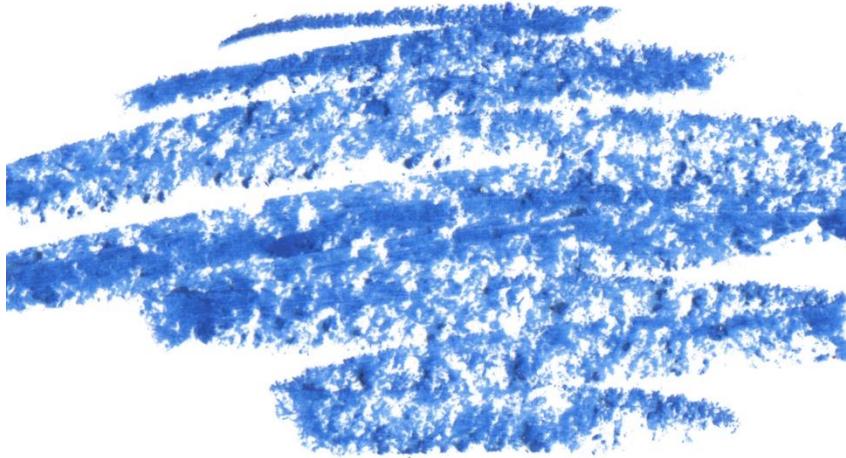


Managing
yourself

Considering
others

Aligning with
organizational
goals

Grant and Ashford (2023) review



"Employees do not just let life happen to them. Rather, they try to affect, shape, curtail, expand and temper what happens in their lives."

Proactive behaviour at work

SELF-INITIATED

CHANGE ORIENTED

FUTURE-ORIENTED



Source: Chia Huei WU & Sharon K. PARKER – extensive literature review on being proactive at work 2013 - 2023

A junior employee asks for feedback on their performance (**self-initiated**) so as to work out what skills to develop (**change-oriented**) and can add a testimonial to resume/Linked In profile (**future-oriented**)



A team member does something unexpected but incredibly valuable, without being asked: i.e. providing the team with folder of organized events and conferences useful for attending for networking **(self-initiated)** in the coming year **(change- and future-oriented)**



A project manager approaches their appraisal by conducting a self-evaluation of recent projects (**self-initiated**), coming up with examples of how they can stretch their skills (**change-oriented**) for future projects (**future orientated**)





BEING MORE PROACTIVE AT WORK

Develop a growth mindset

Stay informed

Foster a culture of adaptability

Develop a flexible communication style

Seek constructive feedback

Develop cross-functional skills

Be more agile in decision-making

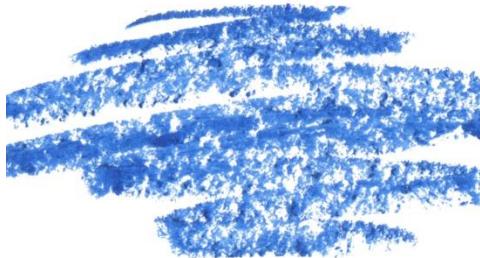
Encourage continuous learning

Develop resilience

Take the initiative more



Everyday proactive behavior at work



- Having a routine for how you work
- Anticipating problems and problem-solving
- Working well with others
- Following up/checking in/giving timely updates
- Not over-committing yourself
- Acting on feedback
- Improving work processes
- Contributing to meetings
- Building your skills

The logo consists of four large, light green, three-dimensional cubes arranged horizontally. Each cube contains a white, bold, sans-serif letter: 'Q', 'U', 'I', and 'Z'. The letters are slightly recessed from the front face of each cube. A faint, semi-transparent reflection of the word 'QUIZ' is visible on the surface below the cubes.

QUIZ



**It's the start of the week.
You feel overwhelmed by all the things on your to-do list.
It's 8.30 am and you sit down at your desk. What do you do?**

- a) Feel anxious about all the things I need to get done.
I start writing down what I think I'll be able to achieve that morning but then another email comes in.

- b) I feel a little anxious and take a few deep breaths to focus. I prioritize some of the tasks on the list in terms of what I can realistically do today and start on the most challenging one.

- c) Switch on my computer, check email and respond but then get distracted by a another website and a work task I can just quickly tick off my list. Then I think about making another cup of coffee



You start the day off in a great mood. Your colleague calls you, and for no reason, seems to fly off the handle.

What is your typical response?

- a) I'm upset at this attack for no reason. I refuse to put up with it and put an end to the call immediately, saying I'll ring back later
- b) I'm outraged and seek to defend myself. I can't have someone talking to me like that and I won't have it. We get into a long drawn out fight and I end up exhausted before the day has even started!
- c) I listen without reacting and use the time to center myself. I realize that whatever the reason is for this outburst, it is probably not personal. I listen and try to engage my colleague and if that does not work I suggest we speak later that day when h/she is less upset.



You're feeling a bit invisible at work and it feels like others are moving forward faster than you.

What is the best thing to do?

- a) Don't worry about it. These things sort themselves out eventually – you're pretty confident about your abilities

- b) You can't really see a clear way forward.
The company is going through some challenging times – it may be best to wait and see what happens.

- c) You start scheduling in some calls and meetings and look for ways that you can contribute.
You also start researching the skills you may need to develop and ask your manager for a meeting to discuss your progression specifically



You've received feedback on a draft work report - it is full of tracked changes and comments by various key people.

You didn't know that your draft was being shared like this.

What do you do?

- a) You fire back an email immediately saying this is not appropriate and that you're not happy and reiterate that this was a draft only.

- b) You take some time before responding to understand the situation more fully and to see who, specifically, has provided this feedback. Although you're a bit upset, you respond politely, thanking them for the feedback and giving a revised date by which they can expect the next draft incorporating the feedback.

- c) You acknowledge their feedback but largely ignore it and pick out only the changes and amends that you agree with.



You have been alarmed and upset by recent economic and world news events.

You are aware that there might be a lot of uncertainty ahead – what do you do?

- a) You start looking for things that you can control – i.e. your wellbeing and daily routine, skills you can develop, limiting how much you watch or listen to the news, being mindful of how much you're on social media.
- b) It's important to keep on top of events and so you make sure you listen to the news as much as possible. You also exchange lots of views and ideas with friends on social media platforms and in conversations. You feel you need to vent as much as you can. It's important to express your feelings.
- c) It's all very worrying. You feel helpless and concerned and really not sure what to do at all. You end up sleeping badly and find it hard to control your moods and emotions

RESULTS!



0 – 5 points - You seem to be pretty reactive to things and events around you. This may mean that you place a lot of energy into the things you cannot control and may engage in complaining, gossip and pointless social media arguments.

You might do this because it makes you feel better (temporarily) and you want to let off steam. When it comes to tasks and goals, you tend to procrastinate, put things off or avoid things.

Start simply noticing what you are doing and what might trigger that behavior. Try, as far as you can, to do ONE thing that is within your control i.e. choose a different response or action. Start from there.



RESULTS!



5 – 10 points - You can certainly be proactive sometimes, anticipating things and acting faster.

At other times you, quite often, prefer “going with the flow” and seeing what happens. You are prone to avoiding confrontation or taking the initiative and will often take the easy option. This may seem the best option in the immediate short-term but won’t enable you to move very far.

Again, start by simply noticing when you do this and try out a different response. Sometimes if something feels a little uncomfortable, it can be a signal that it’s actually a good thing to do – something that will stretch you and take you forward.



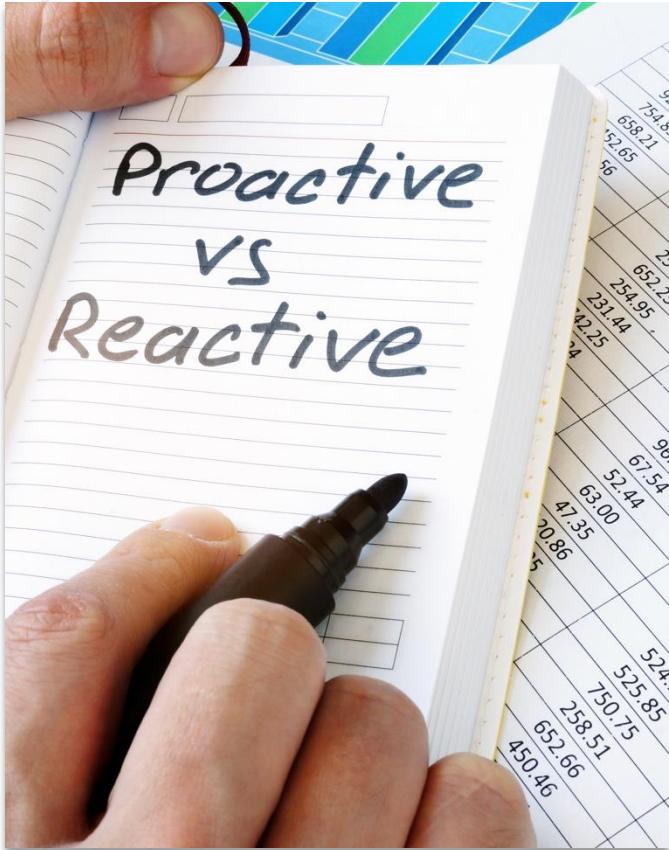
RESULTS!



10 – 15 points - You have a good set of strategies to help you respond effectively – from creating space before responding to placing energy on the things you can control: your behaviour, actions and thoughts.

You are also good at accepting what you cannot change and not wasting time on what you cannot. You are likely to take the initiative and look for opportunities in the midst of change or discomfort.

Know, too, your ability and capacity to do this also relies on your own mental health and state of wellbeing. Make sure you always prioritise your wellbeing so that you are in the best possible mental state.



What's the difference?



Stimulus and response





Being truly proactive day-to-day

Self-care and wellbeing are crucial

Having a sense of purpose

Reflecting and building self-awareness

Managing stress triggers

Nurturing self-confidence

Stretch – initiative

Taking responsibility for ALL your actions

Reactive language	Proactive language
“I can’t” or “Why can’t I...?”	“How can I....?”
“I should” or “I have to”	“I want to”, “I choose to”, “I’d like to....”
“Why can’t I stop doing that?”	“What would I rather be doing?” “What’s one small step I can take towards....”
“That’s just how it is.”	“What can I do to change this?”
“If only I had more time.”	“How can I make time? What’s most important right now?”
“If only they would change.”	“They are who they are. What can I do to meet my own needs or to change this relationship?”
“I can’t do this all on my own.”	“How can I get the support I need?”



Segment 2 – The locus of control

What is it?

What happens when we operate
within our **internal** locus of control

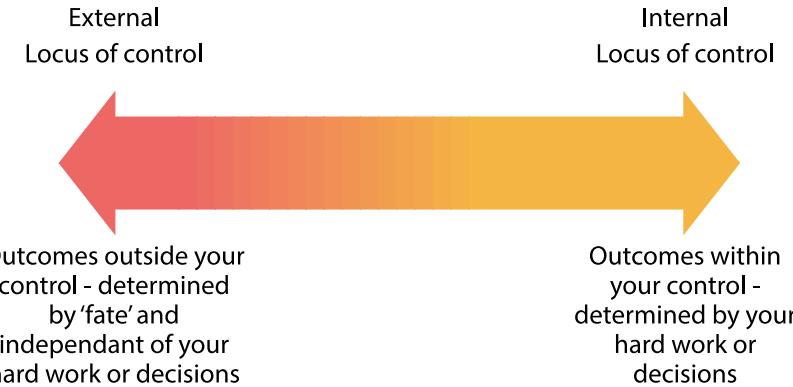
What happens when we operate
within our **external** locus of control

Why we **love** to put energy into what
we cannot control!

How to direct that energy into what
we **can** control for better results



The locus of control



Locus of control is the degree to which people believe that they, as opposed to external forces, have control over the outcome of events in their lives.

The concept was developed by Julian B. Rotter in 1954, and has since become an aspect of personality psychology.

Internal locus of control

External locus of control



- Are more likely to take responsibility for their actions
- Tend to be less influenced by the opinions of other people
- Often do better at tasks when they are allowed to work at their own pace
- Usually, have a strong sense of self-belief
- Tend to work hard to achieve the things they want
- Feel confident in the face of challenges
- Tend to be physically healthier
- Report being happier and more independent
- Often achieve greater success in the workplace



- Blame outside forces for their circumstances
- Often credit luck or chance for any successes
- Don't believe that they can change their situation through their own efforts
- Frequently feel hopeless or powerless in the face of difficult situations
- Are more prone to experiencing learned helplessness (*if you believe you have no control over your situation you can start behaving in a helpless manner*)

Case study - being proactive in the short-term

“I’m not getting the feedback I need at work”

“I’m not progressing”

“Planning a better hybrid working schedule”

“I’m frustrated – nothing I do seems to work”

“My skills are not being recognized”

Proactive behavior	Impact and result
Journaling and reflecting regularly	Self-awareness, ability to reframe, space
Arranging to have virtual coffee and one-to-ones (nurturing relationships)	Working with key partner on exploring and creating brand new initiative
Starting a book club (nurturing relationships)	Emerging topics and themes; exploring different ways of facilitating online groups; connecting with co-head of litigation
Reaching out to other teams	Being brought in to support more senior associates with new and exciting project
Placing energy into pursuing professional aspirations (bar exams for law)	Working in pupillages which meet the need for feedback and affirmation
Regular mindfulness meditation	Able to work longer hours and still feel energised and calm



7 habits to work proactively and not reactively

MONDAYS MONDAYS

WORK OUT OF YOUR
PRIORITIES LIST

BLOCK OUT TIME
FOR EMAILS

SCHEDULE SEASONS
LIKE SEMESTERS

BREAKING UP IS
HARD TO DO

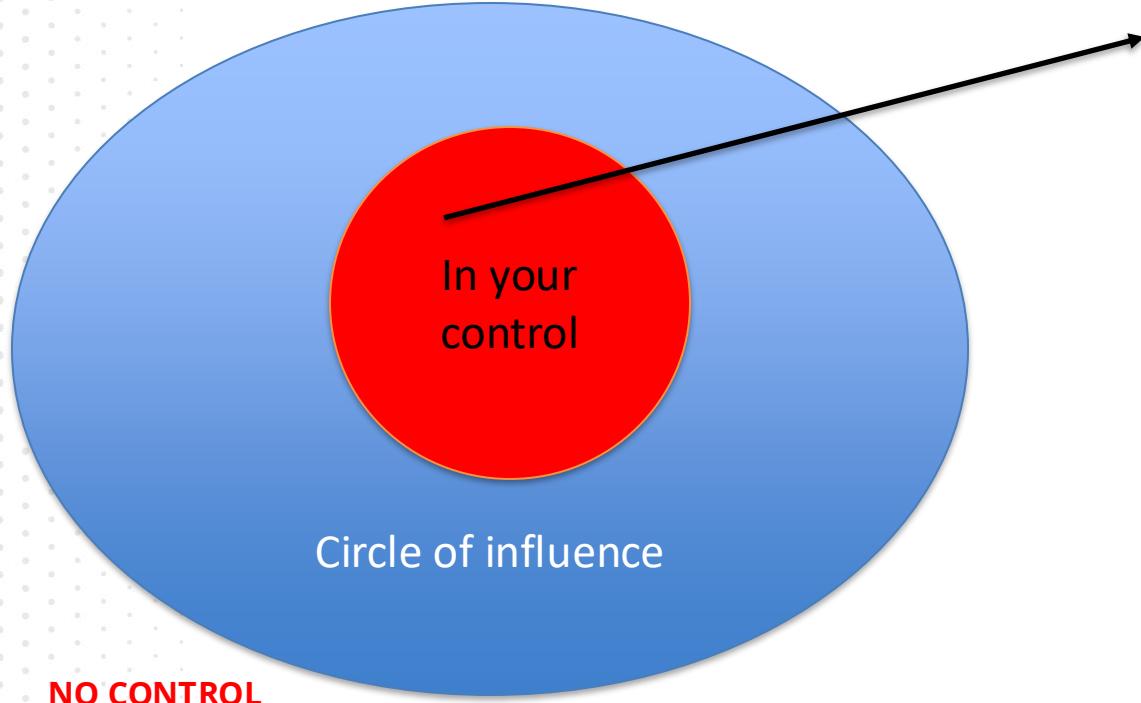
BANISH OVERTHINK

CELEBRATE WINS



Why we love to put our energy into what we can't control





YOUR THOUGHTS – ACTIONS

Choosing how to start your day
How much media to consume
Who to interact with and when
How many meetings to have
Working out ways to take the initiative
Choosing a different response
Managing stress triggers
How and when to take breaks
What to eat to nurture yourself
How many things to take on
When to say "no"
When to say "yes"
Creating a good environment
Reflecting
Cultivating presence
Trying a different approach
Being willing to listen



YOUR TURN!



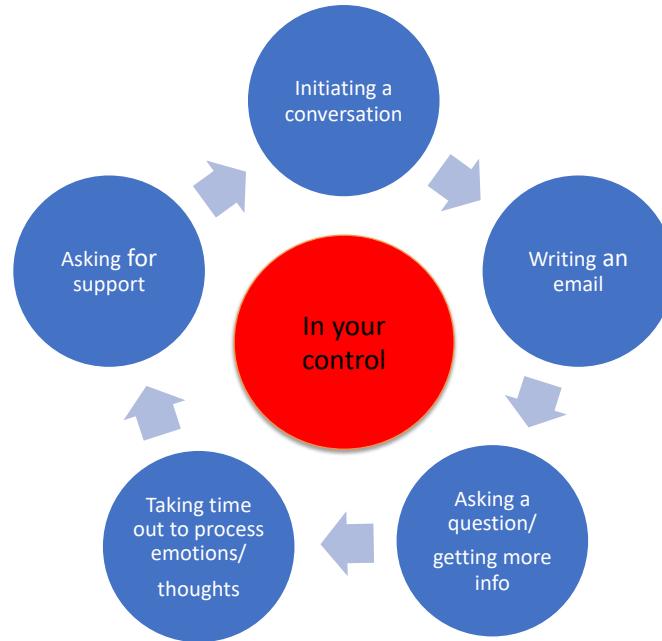
Try this!

Shifting Energy Exercise

1. Think of a current **challenge** you are facing at the moment. It can be anything – a situation that is bothering you professionally or personally or it could be something you would like to be different. Take some time to **define** the situation and make a few notes.
2. Next, identify two or three specific **actions** or decisions you can take that are **WITHIN YOUR CONTROL**

Two things happen when you place your energy into what you can control:

- You feel better immediately
- You influence the situation and create shift



REFLECTION

When it comes to being proactive in YOUR life – what do you struggle with most?

What is ONE thing you could actively do?





**BREATHE,
STRETCH
AND
TAKE A BREAK**



Segment 3 – Managing procrastination and stress

Why we procrastinate

Typical procrastination activities

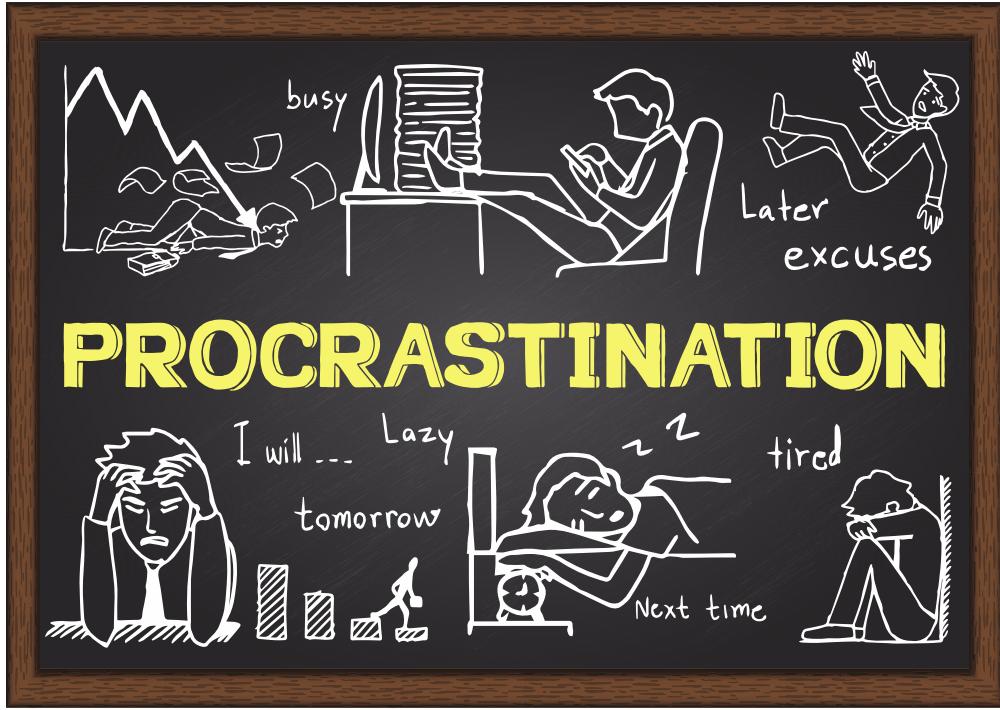
Tips to deal with it

How stress affects us

Practical steps for managing stress triggers

Mindfulness grounding exercise





— “My advice is, never do tomorrow what you can do today. Procrastination is the thief of time. Collar him!”

- Charles Dickens (from David Copperfield)

Procrastination is....



-making a decision (for no valid reason) to delay or not complete a task or goal you've committed to.
- Instead, you do something of lesser importance, ***despite*** there being negative consequences to not following through on the original task or goal.

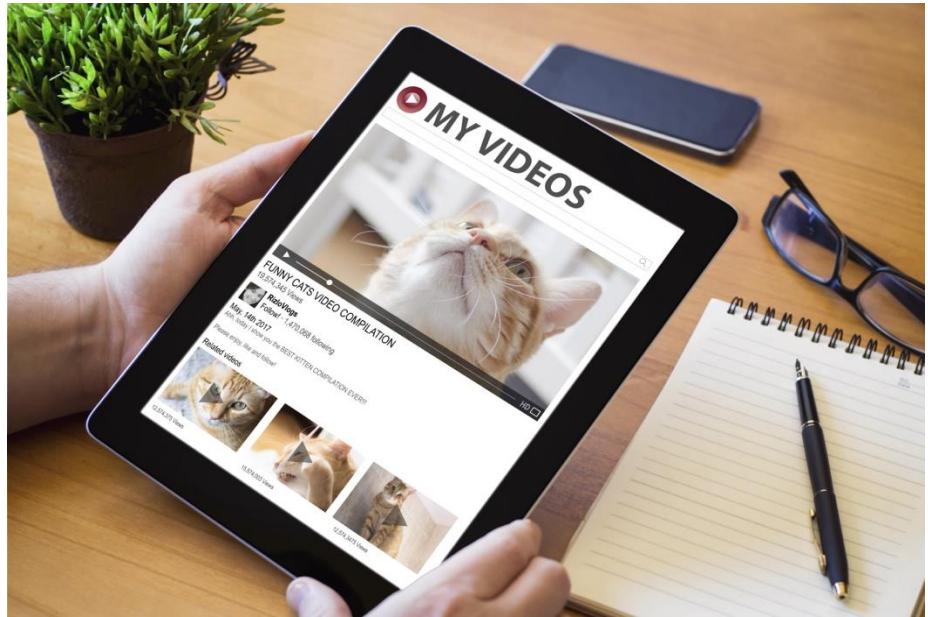
Why we procrastinate

We don't know how to manage negative feelings about a task

We give in to distractions for instant gratification

We feel disconnected to our future self

The problem with procrastinators is that they know what they are doing and how it's going to affect them yet they cannot help but procrastinate!



Typical procrastination activities



What are yours?

What we tell ourselves...

*"I'll just
get xxx
done first"*

What we tell ourselves...

*"I'll just
get xxx
done first"*

*"I don't have
everything I
need to start
right now"*

What we tell ourselves...

*"I'll just
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*"I don't have
everything I
need to start
right now"*

*"It's better to do
it when I'm in
the right mood"*



What we tell ourselves...

*"I'll just
get xxx
done first"*

*"I don't have
everything I
need to start
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*"It's better to do
it when I'm in
the right mood"*

*"I've got plenty of
time, I'll do it
later"*



What we tell ourselves...

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*"I'm better when
I'm up against a
deadline"*

What we tell ourselves...

*"I'll just
get xxx
done first"*

*"I don't have
everything I
need to start
right now"*

*"It's better to do
it when I'm in
the right mood"*

*"I've got plenty of
time, I'll do it
later"*

*"I'm better when
I'm up against a
deadline"*

*"Delaying this by
a day or a week
won't change
anything"*





Did you know that emotions play a massive part in procrastination?

The more self-aware you are and the more you understand what is going on, the more you can develop strategies to support yourself.



"I must do things perfectly"

Fear of failure

"I can't do things when I'm stressed/tired /depressed"

"Things should be done my way. Shouldn't have to..."

Depleted energy

Needing to be in charge

"Life's too short to be doing things that are boring"

"It's better to do nothing than take a risk"

"I can't do it/I'm inadequate/d don't have the skills"

Pleasure-seeking

Fear of uncertainty

Low self-confidence



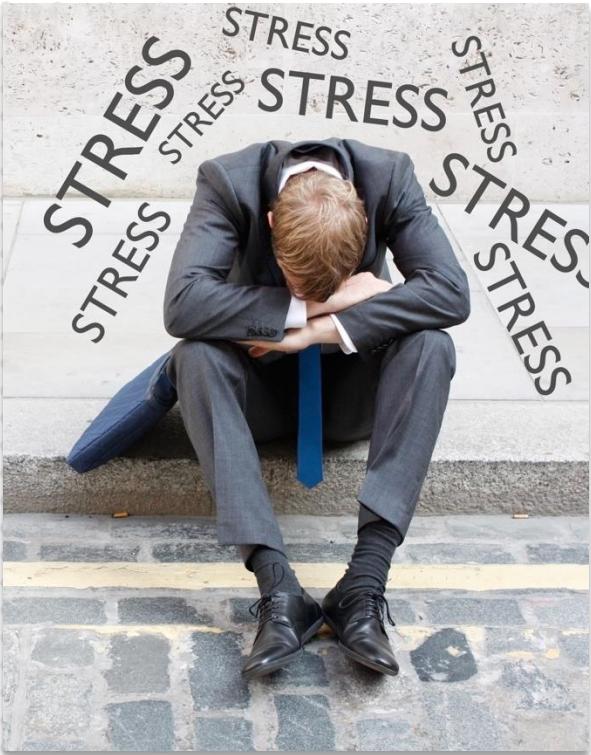
Good stress vs bad stress

How do you manage stress triggers?

HOW STRESS SHOWS UP:

**in our bodies
in how we are feeling
in what our brains do
in how we behave**





In our bodies



clenched jaw, headaches, low energy, insomnia, tension, rapid heartbeat, nausea

In our emotions



frustration, moodiness, unable to relax, low self-esteem, low confidence, avoidance

In our brains



constant worrying, racing thoughts, poor judgement, inability to focus

In our behaviour



changes in appetite, procrastination, use of distractions (alcohol, food, Netflix), snapping, overreacting



Pearson

The Evidenceⁱ

Emotional Regulation

Mindfulness facilitates the self-regulation of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours in a way that impacts positively on both performance and employee well-being^{4,5}.

Strategic Thinking

Research indicates that mindfulness helps people see ‘the bigger picture’^{8,9,10}.

Neurological evidence corroborates this by demonstrating that mindfulness leads to increased activity in the brain regions involved in perspective-taking¹¹.

Decision making

People who practice meditation show increased activity in the areas of the brain associated with rational decision making¹³.

Focus and Concentration

Research into the use of mindfulness in work settings indicates that mindfulness increases ‘attentional breadth’ facilitating an increase in awareness of many things simultaneously⁶.

Neurological analysis of participants on an 8-week mindfulness course demonstrates an increase in grey matter concentration in the parts of the brain associated with learning and memory processes⁷.

Stress Reduction and Resilience

There is evidence that mindfulness can reduce stress in the work environment and increase resilience to stress^{2,12}.

The Evidenceⁱ

Performance and Wellbeing

A wealth of studies indicates that mindfulness can improve performance and wellbeing at work.

Glomb et al (2001) review the evidence and the factors and processes underlying this link¹².

Research by Davidson et al, demonstrates that mindfulness training promotes a shift from brain activity associated with stress and worry to that associated with joy and wellbeing (see below)¹⁸.

Productivity

In addition to the results of mindfulness programs carried out by Transport for London, another study showed that just four sessions of mindfulness training “significantly improved visuo-spatial processing, working memory, and executive functioning”¹⁴.

Communication and Empathy

In a program investigating the effect of mindful communication on primary care physicians participants reported that “mindfulness skills improved the participants’ ability to be attentive and listen deeply to patients’ concerns, respond to patients more effectively, and develop adaptive reserve”¹⁵. Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) has also been shown to increase empathy scores in medical and premedical students.¹⁹

The practice of mindfulness meditation is also linked with increased emotional intelligence¹⁶.



Pearson

How to stop procrastinating

TRY THESE!	TAKE MICRO-STEPs!
Worst first	Prime time
Use momentum	Prime place
Just 5 minutes	Reminders
Set time limits	Visualize
Remember – then - do	Focus
Plan rewards	

**ALSO: challenge negative thought patterns
and emotions**





TIME FOR Q&A

Segment 4 – Taking on challenges



Moving towards challenges

Working to your strengths

Adopting a growth mindset

What skills and qualities do you need
to nurture and develop?

Action planning exercise



Consistent steps TOWARDS



Are you working to your strengths?

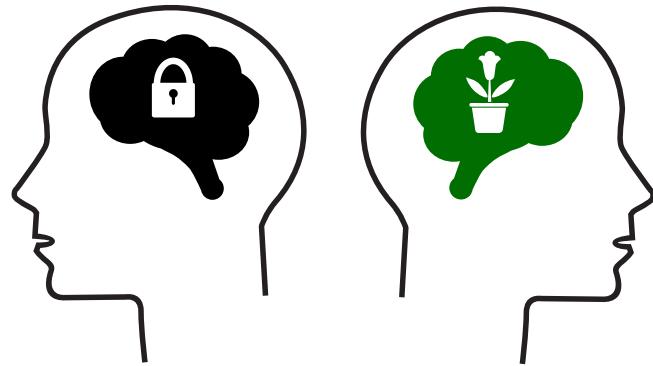


Better motivation

Stronger engagement

Productivity

Stronger relationships with peers



FIXED MINDSET VS GROWTH MINDSET

What is a growth mindset?



Growth Mindset

VS



Fixed Mindset

This growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts.

Although people may differ in every which way—in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments—everyone can change and grow through application and experience.



10 ways to develop a growth mindset

1. Identify your own mindset	6. Learn something new
2. Look at your own improvements	7. Make mistakes
3. Review the success of others	8. Be kind to yourself
4. Seek feedback	9. Look at examples
5. Harness the power of “yet”	10. Set realistic goals



SET SMART GOALS!



**SPECIFIC
MEASURABLE
ACHIEVABLE
REALISTIC TIME BOUND**

Works for both longer-term **and** short-term goals.

REFLECTION



**REFLECT: WHAT SKILLS AND QUALITIES
DO I WANT TO DEVELOP? HOW AM I GOING TO DO THAT?**

Segment 5 – Boosting your proactive skills every day



Practical strategies and tips

YOUR takeaways

Final Q&A

Boost your proactive skills every day

COMMIT TO DAILY ACTIONS	FOLLOW THROUGH!
Plan for procrastination	Space between stimulus and response
Invest in a planning system	Take the first step towards something
Regularly reflect and reality check	Set goals for yourself and make them SMART
Start your day well	Nurture positive relationships
Ask for feedback and use it	Communicate clearly
Be in the best possible mental space	Breathe and slow down – regulate your emotional responses more

What are YOUR takeaways?





Q & A

THANK YOU!

REMEMBER:

- TODAY is the start of sharpening these skills
- USE the tools and ideas as soon as you can

AND

- DO provide feedback on this session – this is very valuable and helps inform future sessions.