

## 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



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# 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

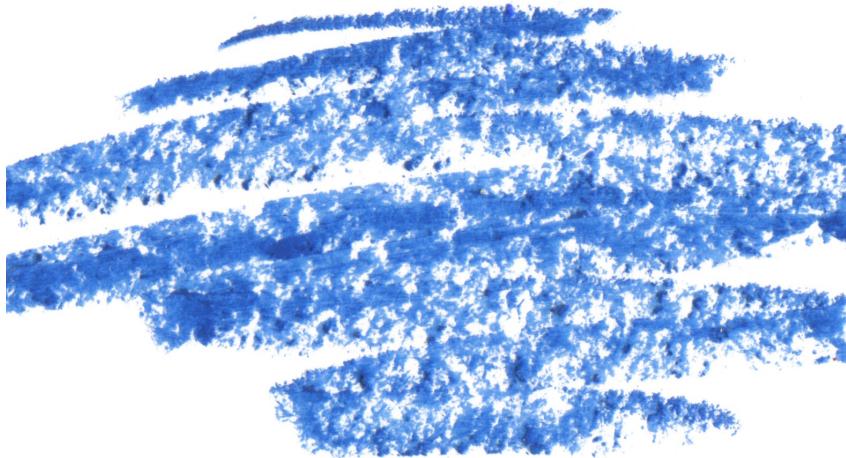
The difference between being proactive and reactive

Being truly proactive – take responsibility for every single action



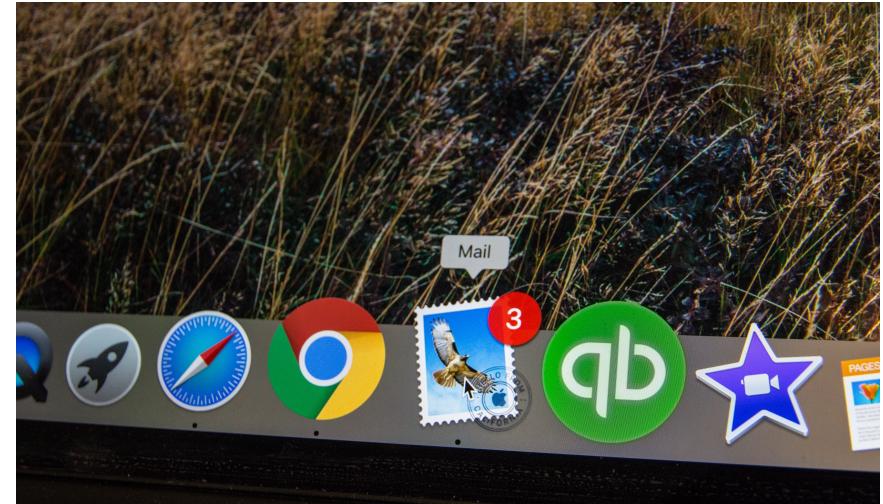
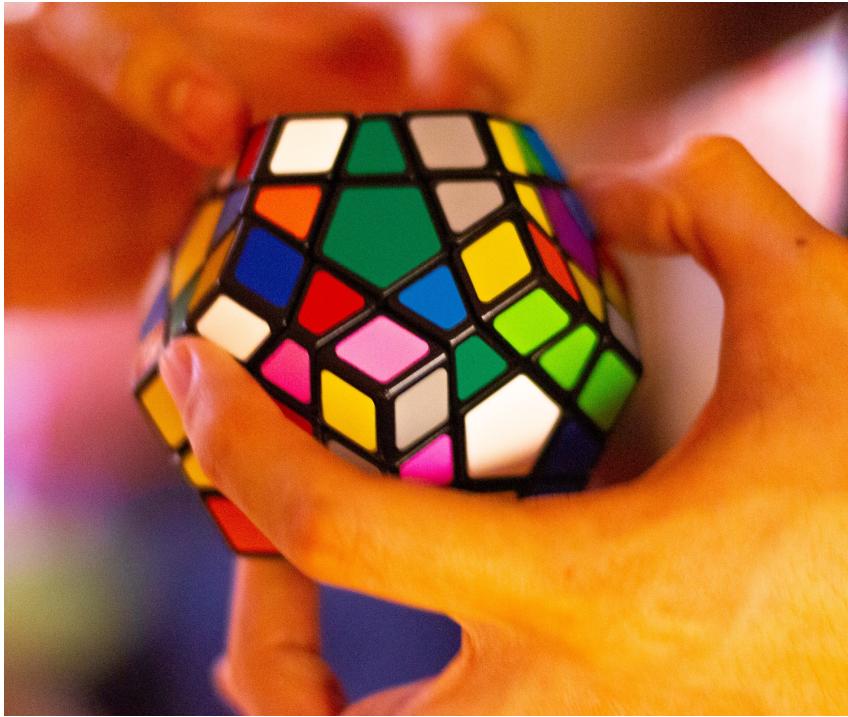
## **WHAT DOES “BEING PROACTIVE” MEAN?**

# 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 – I will pick up on these later in the session.*



# TRAITS AND CHARACTERISTICS

active

# TRAITS AND CHARACTERISTICS

active

self-aware

# TRAITS AND CHARACTERISTICS

active

self-aware

build self-confidence



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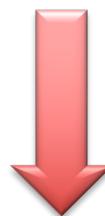
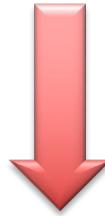
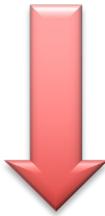
**ACTIVELY BUILD AND NURTURE ALL OF THESE!**



Pearson

# WHY IS THIS SKILL SO HIGHLY VALUED BY EMPLOYERS?

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

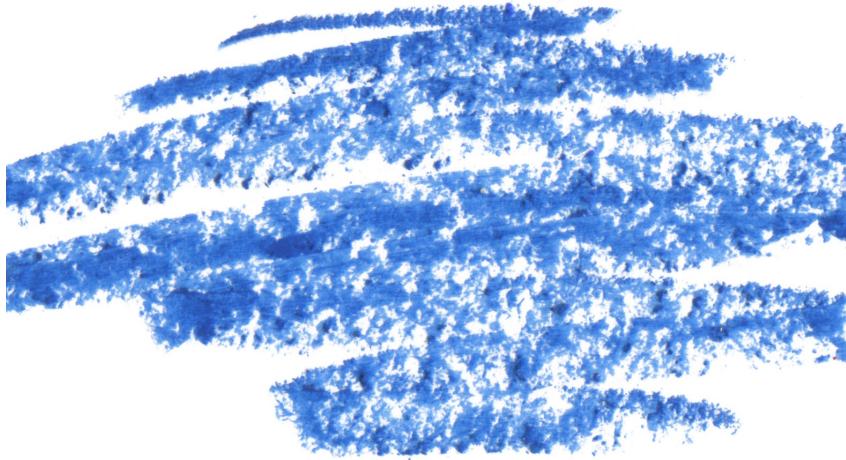


Managing  
yourself

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 ORIENTATED***

***FUTURE-ORIENTED***



*An intern asks for feedback on their performance (**self-initiated**) so as to work out what skills to develop (**change-orientated**) and can add a testimonial to CV/Linked In profile (**future-orientated**)*



*Someone in a junior position (or a team member) does something unexpected but incredibly valuable, without being asked: ie providing the team with folder of useful 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-orientated**) for future projects (**future orientated**)*



The logo consists of four large, light green, rounded rectangular blocks arranged horizontally. Each block contains a white, bold, uppercase letter spelling out "QUIZ". A faint, semi-transparent reflection of the letters is visible on the surface below them.

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



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**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) I fire back an email immediately saying this is not appropriate and that I am not happy and reiterate that this was a draft only.
  
- b) I take some time before responding to understand the situation more fully and to see who, Specifically, has provided feedback. Although I'm a bit upset I respond politely, thanking them for the feedback and giving a revised date by which they can expect the next draft incorporating the feedback.
  
- c) I acknowledge their feedback but largely ignore it and pick out only the changes and amends that I 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) I start looking for things that I can control – i.e. my wellbeing and daily routine, skills I can develop, limiting how much I watch the news, being mindful of how much I am on social media.
- b) It's important to keep on top of events and so I make sure I listen to the news as much as possible. I also exchange lots of views and ideas with friends on social media platforms and in conversations. I feel I need to vent as much as I can. It's important to express your feelings.
- c) It's all very worrying. I feel helpless and concerned and really not sure what to do at all. I end up sleeping badly and finding it hard to control my 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.



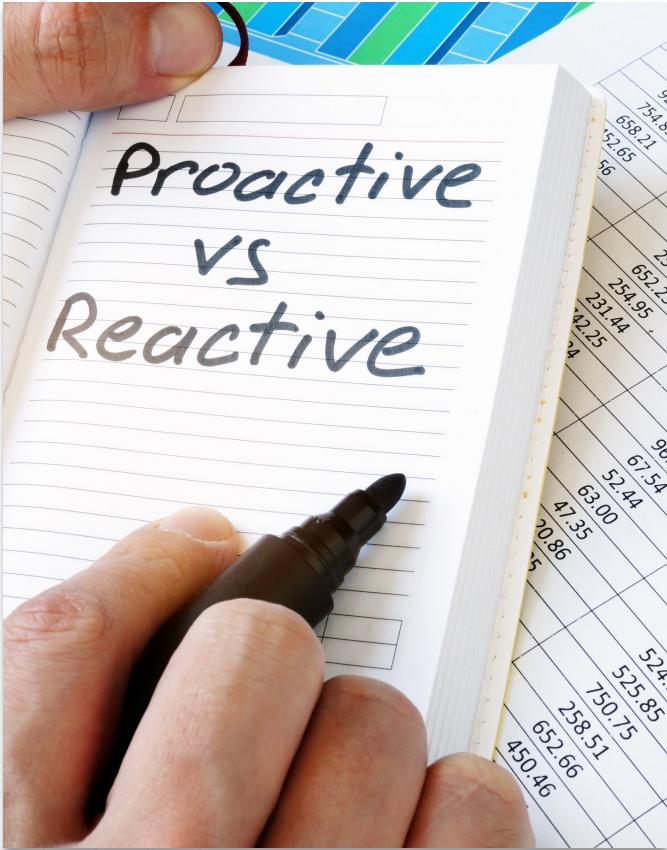
# RESULTS!



**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 our 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 recognised”*

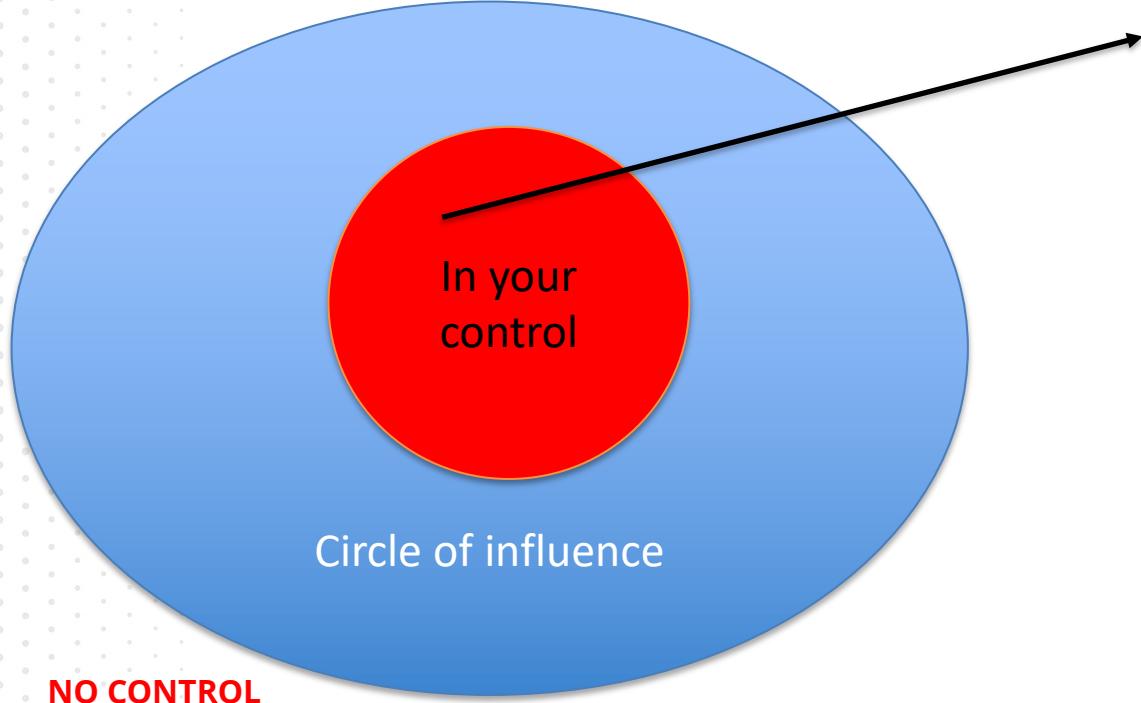
Proactive behaviour	Impact and result
Journaling and reflecting regularly	Self-awareness, ability to reframe, space
Arranging to have virtual coffee and one-to-ones (nurturing relationships)	Working with key partner on exploring and creating brand new initiative
Starting a book club (nurturing relationships)	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



I

*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!





**BREATHE,  
STRETCH  
AND  
TAKE A BREAK**

# REFLECTION

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

# What is ONE thing you could actively do?





# **Segment 3 – Managing procrastination and stress**

**Why we procrastinate**

**Typical procrastination activities**

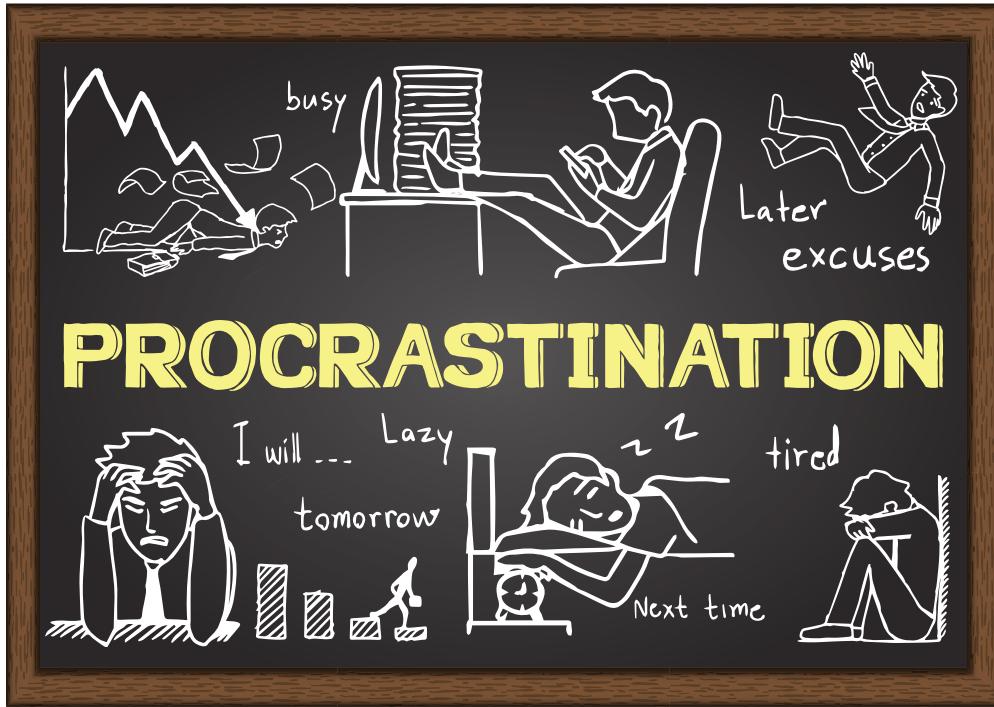
**Tips to deal with it**

**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.

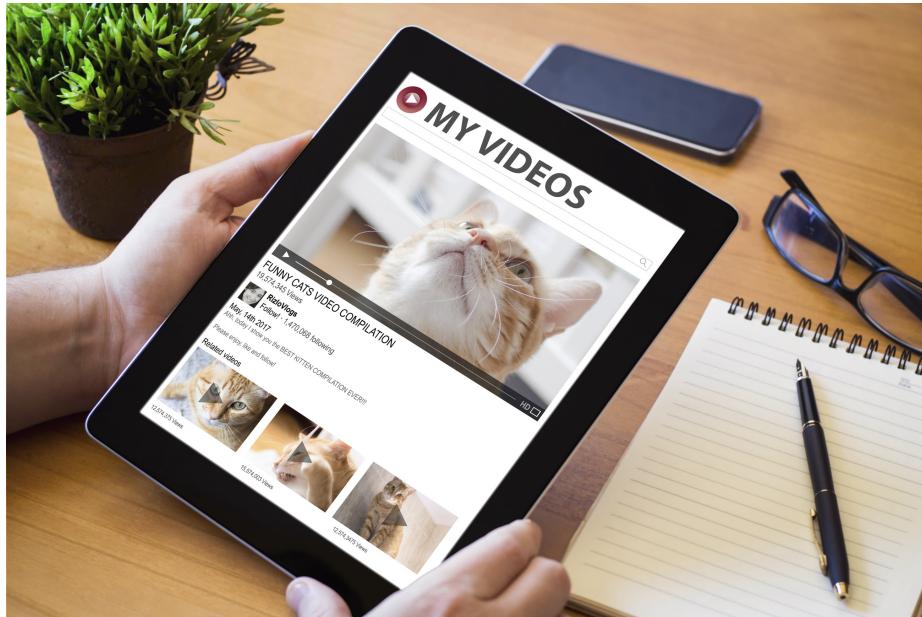
# Why we procrastinate

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

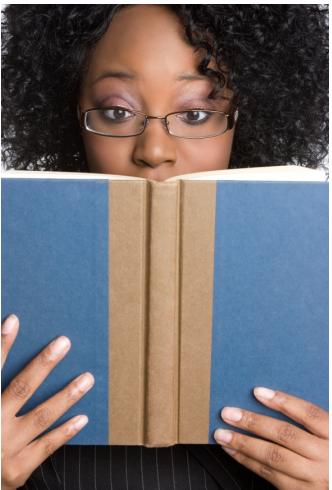
We give in to distractions for instant gratification

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  
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*"I don't have  
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*"It's better to do  
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*"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.



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*"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..."*

### 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"*

### Pleasure-seeking

### Fear of uncertainty

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

### Low self-confidence



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## Good stress vs bad stress

How do you manage stress triggers?

**STRESS SHOWS UP:**

- in our bodies
- In how we are feeling
- In what our brains do
- In how we behave





In our bodies



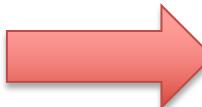
clenched jaw, headaches, low energy, insomnia, tension, rapid heartbeat, nausea

In our emotions



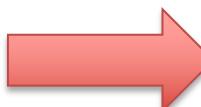
frustration, moodiness, unable to relax, low self-esteem, low confidence, avoidance

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



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## The Evidence<sup>i</sup>

### 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<sup>4,5</sup>.

### Strategic Thinking

Research indicates that mindfulness helps people see ‘the bigger picture’<sup>8,9,10</sup>.

Neurological evidence corroborates this by demonstrating that mindfulness leads to increased activity in the brain regions involved in perspective-taking<sup>11</sup>.

### Decision making

People who practice meditation show increased activity in the areas of the brain associated with rational decision making<sup>13</sup>.

### 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 simultaneously<sup>6</sup>.

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 processes<sup>7</sup>.

### Stress Reduction and Resilience

There is evidence that mindfulness can reduce stress in the work environment and increase resilience to stress<sup>2,12</sup>.

### 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”<sup>15</sup>. Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) has also been shown to increase empathy scores in medical and premedical students.<sup>19</sup>

The practice of mindfulness meditation is also linked with increase emotional intelligence<sup>16</sup>.

### 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 link<sup>12</sup>.

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)<sup>18</sup>.

### Productivity

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



# How to stop procrastinating

TRY THESE!	TAKE MICRO-STEPs!
Worst first	Prime time
Use momentum	Prime place
Just 5 minutes	Reminders
Set time limits	Visualise
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

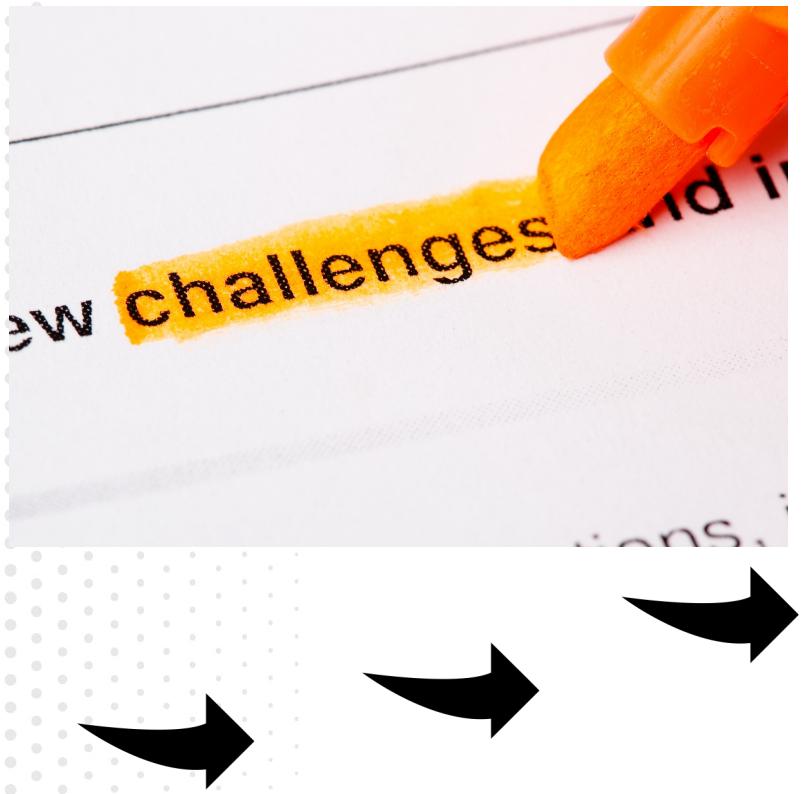
Adopting a growth mindset

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

Action planning exercise



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Consistent steps TOWARDS



# **Are you working to your strengths?**

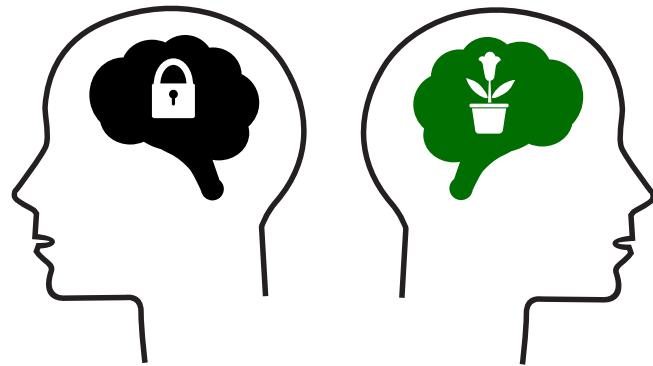


Better motivation

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



# TIME FOR A REFLECTION BREAK....



**REFLECT: WHAT SKILLS AND QUALITIES  
DO I WANT TO DEVELOP?**

# **Segment 5 – Boosting your proactive skills every day**



Practical strategies and tips

YOUR takeaways

Final Q&A



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# Boosting 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
Regularly reflect and reality check	Set goals for yourself
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!

# 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.