

Ep #125: Procrastination



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With Your Host

Kori Linn

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This week we're talking about procrastination.

You are listening to *Love Your Job Before You Leave It*, the podcast for ambitious, high-achieving women who are ready to stop feeling stressed about work and kiss burnout goodbye forever. Whether you're starting a business or staying in your day job, this show will give you the coaching and guidance you need to start loving your work today. Here's your host, Career Coach, Kori Linn.

Hello, hello, hello, happy Wednesday. I hope this week is treating you wonderfully. And I'm pretty excited to talk to y'all about a topic that I think impacts all of us at some point or another.

And before we get started, I want to read something that one of my clients wrote, and it is directly related to today's topic of procrastination. And it actually inspired this entire podcast, which is so funny because I was like, procrastination part two. And then I went to go look to see what I had said in procrastination part one and then I realized there wasn't a procrastination part one, or I guess this is procrastination part one.

So I thought I had already done a podcast on this, but apparently I haven't. Or probably I've talked about procrastination in a lot of podcasts, but there's not one that's specifically titled procrastination because that's what I was looking for, and I didn't find it. But that's okay because we're just going to make it right now.

So, we were talking about procrastination on one of the SAF calls and then one of the clients, not the one who was being coached on it, but a different one, wrote up some stuff about their own experiences with procrastination, and specifically the ways they've coached themselves on this already and sort of moved through some of the stuff that a lot of people struggle with, the self-judgmental thoughts and stuff.

And I loved what this client wrote so much that I asked them if I could share it with you, and they said, yes. And they also, rather than be anonymous, said I could tell y'all who they are.

Ep #125: Procrastination

So this client is a client of mine named Kathy. And Kathy has worked with me off and on for a few years and she's done a lot of one on one with me and then now she's in SAF. And I adore her, she's wonderful. You're going to adore her, too. And you can follow her at [thought.work](#) on Instagram. So again, that is [thought.work](#) on Instagram.

And she's an illustrator and designer, so I've shared her stuff before from my Instagram because she makes cute illustrations that help explain coaching and thought work concepts.

And if you're not familiar with the phrase thought work, thought work is the kind of coaching that I do, which primarily relates to mindset and how the thoughts we think impact the ways that we feel and impact the actions and inactions we take in the world, which impact everything else, our relationships, our careers, our homes. Everything, everything, everything is impacted by this. So that's some background.

So here's what the post says, "I just wanted to say I totally related to the procrastination topic and I've struggled with it a lot in the past (and still do). I wanted to share what was helpful to me. I've done a lot of work to destigmatize the idea of procrastination to myself. I actually don't even like using the word because I have such a huge reaction to it.

So I went through and actually did an accounting of the specific actions I was doing when I thought I was procrastinating. I don't have a specific example on hand, but let's pretend it's something like this: one, shopping on Amazon. Two, scrolling IG. Three, watching Netflix. Four, organizing a random shelf in my refrigerator. Five, sitting in my chair staring into space. Six, typing in Slack. Seven, texting.

So looking at this list I got sad because I was still sitting there labeling a lot of the items as "bad." Then I realized that I hadn't actually said what I was doing, I just put my actions into judgmental buckets.

So I did the list again. One, picking out shirts for the kids because they outgrew everything again. Two, looking for style inspiration for branding for

Ep #125: Procrastination

my business. Three, looking for something pleasurable to watch to put me in a good mood for my day.

Four, making room for my grocery delivery. Five, feeling really tired but fighting the urge to nap. Six, interacting with various people about topics that I was interested in about workplace culture, comparing notes on design struggles, offering comfort and solidarity to friends, receiving comfort and solidarity from friends. Seven, making sure my sister got the package I sent her.

So then I looked at this and I had this earth shattering thought, I am not wasting my time. Almost all of these things were completely valid shit that I needed to do or deal with. Some of them are about nurturing important relationships. Some I could do without or do later, that's it.

What was happening for me was that I was having a prioritizing error. What I really wanted to prioritize was something like number two. Also because social media being like it is, I got sucked in and didn't do the quick thing I was trying to do in the first place. That was a realization that really helped me stop judging myself so I can get to the useful things I could maybe do to help me keep my focus.

The lists and project management tools and whatnot weren't helpful to me until I was able to disassemble that thought. This is also the approach I used to stop judging myself about my financial habits. I was judging the fuck out of myself for buying so many things on Amazon. If I hadn't looked closer I would have missed something really, really important, that 80% of it was for my household or the kids. And not only should I not feel guilty for buying it, I should be billing my husband for half of it.

Now, I assume there's a good reason for everything I purchase or want to purchase. But I'm allowed to just analyze that and figure out if what I want aligns with current priorities.

Anyways, disclaimer, none of this means I never "procrastinate" anymore, but this big weight came off when I was able to shift this."

Ep #125: Procrastination

Okay, so I just love so much of what Kathy is talking about in this post because I think we do this all the time for a lot of categories, but especially for procrastination, where we spend some time doing something and then we sort of just assume that what we were doing is bad, or wrong, or not what we should be doing. And then we put it in this giant bucket called procrastination and then we beat ourselves up for it. Versus what Kathy then did, which was she really went in and examined, wait, what was I actually doing and why was I actually doing that stuff?

And what she found when she did that was that there was a good reason for everything she was doing. And this hits on something that I teach and talk about a lot, which is I like to assume, now I can't prove this, again, this is an assumption. But I like to operate from the assumption that if I'm doing something, there's a good reason and then I need to find out what that reason is. And then if I want to stop doing the thing, I have to address the reason and I have to address the part of me that thinks the thing makes sense in order to stop doing it.

But that's not even what we're necessarily talking about here. We're not necessarily talking about stopping, because what we're really talking about is getting honest with yourself about what you're doing and if it's even a problem, or if the only problem is just that you are labeling it as procrastination and blaming it for you not having whatever experience you want to have.

I also just want to say that even if what you are doing isn't something you want to be doing and if it is "true" procrastination, if you're procrastinating, there's probably a good reason. And it's either like the thing that you're trying to get yourself to do feel scary, or you don't know how to get started, or you're going to be mean to yourself when you do it because you won't do it perfectly or something like that.

And so if you are procrastinating in the sense that you're doing something that's not what you want to be doing, or you're not doing the thing you want to be prioritizing, we can look at that. But I think doing what Kathy did,

Ep #125: Procrastination

which is like really destigmatizing and stepping out of that shame spiral loop cycle is going to be incredibly helpful here.

So here's what I want you to think about, where is an area in your life where you're procrastinating, or where you're adding that label, where you're putting things you're doing into that label? And then let's just get really specific, like Kathy did. What are you actually doing that you're calling procrastination? And then why are you doing that? And if there were a good reason to be doing that, what is the good reason?

And then from there you can think about like, okay, so maybe I'm doing these things that do make sense, but maybe I want to shift the prioritization. Maybe I'm getting stuck in these things that actually I'm doing for a good reason, but they're not the thing I want to be spending my time on right now.

So one of Kathy's examples was going on social media to look for inspiration for branding, but because social media and Instagram are the way they are, we can sometimes get stuck or trapped there. So in that instance, if you're like, oh, I actually want to prioritize that, but I don't want to get stuck and trapped there, then one example of something you can do is set a timer.

I actually do this. Sometimes I go on Instagram to try to find posts I can share and kind of comment on, sometimes I go on TikTok just to give myself a little break and watch videos. If I don't set a timer, I'll just watch TikToks for like an hour.

So setting a timer really helps me sort of honor what the intention of that choice is without getting stuck in the social media loop de loop of like, you know, I'm just here and scrolling and scrolling and scrolling until eventually I'm like, what happened? How many hours have gone by?

Okay, so once you're aware of what it is you're doing, then you just prioritize it. And if you need to containerize it by doing things like setting timers, then you containerize things. So you might find out that the things

Ep #125: Procrastination

you're doing that you thought were procrastinating are actually really useful things that you want to have done.

Like maybe when you think you're procrastinating you're washing all your laundry. And you're like, well, I actually don't want to stop washing my laundry, but maybe I want to containerize it where I'm like, okay, I'll do one load today and I'll spend this much time, and then I'm also going to add in this other high priority thing. Or you might find that the only change you need to make is to stop belittling yourself.

I also want to say I believe, and I can't prove this, but I believe that everyone procrastinates at least a little bit because life is hard and full of lots of unpleasant things. And when we're trying to do big difficult things, like achieve difficult goals, or get ourselves to job search, or something that like, ultimately aligns with our values, but may feel unpleasant in the moment, I think it makes sense that we would try to be like, no, I don't really want to and kind of stack a few things in the way of doing that.

And I just want to say, you can have a really incredible, deeply satisfying, wonderful, wildly delicious life without eliminating procrastination. I have a multiple six-figure business, I have an extremely wonderful relationship with my significant other, Alex, and I'm building friendships in Sacramento, and I'm trying to keep up with my family and texting people, and doing all this stuff that I think, for me, is a very satisfying life. And I also still procrastinate.

I don't necessarily think it's a problem. And again, it's like that label piece. It's like, if you call it procrastination, then maybe you feel bad about it, versus if you call it like, yeah, I'm a social mammal and I don't always want to do hard things and sometimes I want a little treat time before or after. Then I'm just like, yeah, of course. It just doesn't have to bother me.

So I would offer that for you too because I think the thing is, we get so down on ourselves about the idea of procrastination because we think we shouldn't ever do it and because we think doing it is preventing us from reaching our goals. And so if you just put both of those thoughts down, flip

Ep #125: Procrastination

them and reverse them, like, yeah, what if you're supposed to fuck off sometimes and that's fine and part of a wonderful, satisfying, but also really fulfilling life. What if that's okay?

Just like we're supposed to rest sometimes, we're supposed to sleep sometimes. We're not always supposed to be achieving, achieving, achieving. And also, what if you can have that time and still hit those big goals you're dreaming of?

Now, again, this also brings up prioritization. If you kind of break down the tasks and you realize you're always prioritizing these little day to day tasks that are just kind of keeping the status quo maintained, or if you're prioritizing these sort of tasks that aren't in alignment with what you're actually trying to do, then we may want to make some edits. But calling it procrastination is not necessary if that label is going to make you feel shitty about yourself.

Anytime we label our behavior in a way that makes us feel shitty about ourselves, I feel like that just pushes us into shame. And shame doesn't want to get up and create and take big bold risks and step into the spotlight and do all that stuff that's probably part of getting to our big goals.

Shame wants you to curl up and hide and just like, ugh. I almost imagine curling in on myself, like one of those little bugs. Those like little roly pollies. You're just like, no thanks. And that's not going to give you the capacity to take these big risks or to do hard work because hard work already feels hard even if we're feeling capable and like we're a badass. But hard work is really hard to get yourself to do if you're in that place of self-judgment and shame.

And it feels way too risky, right? If you're already shitting all over yourself, then risking the rejection by putting a post for your business on social media, or making an inquiry to do an informational interview with someone in a field you're interested in, that's probably going to feel too dangerous if you're already in a place where you feel judged and ashamed.

Ep #125: Procrastination

So I think even if you have been doing a bunch of behaviors that don't align with your priorities, being willing to believe that that's okay, you're a human, it doesn't mean anything about you, and you're still fully capable and it's okay to go and try and fail, and it's okay to mean to go and try and get lost in a little Instagram hole for a while and then come back to it. All of that is okay.

And all of it can be part of the path to wherever it is you're trying to go. Whether you're trying to build a business. Whether you're trying to launch a side hustle. Whether you're trying to get new job. Whether you're trying to change industries. Whether you're trying to find a partner. Whether you're trying to repair a relationship that's had a rupture. There's space, I think, in all of these journeys for activities that aren't as high priority, and also for activities that are actually just sort of more about soothing ourselves and taking a load off for a few minutes.

Okay, so to review, when you judge yourself for procrastinating, or even if you don't think it's a judgment, when you notice that procrastination is something you're doing, or you're procrastinating on a big goal, or if you notice you're spending a lot of time doing an activity that you generally think of as procrastination, like, for me, it's being on Instagram a lot, you can do what Kathy did and you can actually go back through the specific actions you're listing and think through what it is you were actually trying to do and why you were trying to do it.

And I think this is the space where you can also, even if it's an action that you, like Kathy was saying, you're like, oh, maybe I don't want to prioritize that right now, or maybe that could be done at a different time, or maybe it doesn't actually have to be done at all, you can still honor the value and the beauty of what you were trying to do, right?

So it's like, one of Kathy's examples was cleaning out a shelf in the fridge. And then when she thought through, what she was actually doing was making room for a grocery delivery. So even if you decided, okay, that's not the most important thing to do ahead of time, you could still honor, like, wow, but it really was great of me that I was on it.

Ep #125: Procrastination

And I was thoughtful, and I was trying to prepare for the grocery delivery. But maybe I'm going to take that time back from that activity and do this other thing that is a higher priority. And then when the grocery delivery comes, I'll just clean the shelf out then.

So what I'm saying is, if you kind of go through your accounting of what it is you're actually doing when your brain says you're procrastinating, whether you're going to continue doing that action or not, whether you're going to keep it prioritized or deprioritize it, whether you're going to ditch it, delegate it, do a worse job on it, or whether you're going to keep doing it, I think taking a moment to pause and appreciating the value of what you were doing is really powerful.

Because like I'm always saying, I think it's so easy for us and so habitual for us to dig on ourselves, and criticize ourselves, and tell ourselves like, oh, why would you do that? Or like, that doesn't matter, or like how could you get distracted by that? Versus being like, wow, you were trying to do something really useful and really helpful to future me. And that's really cool, and I appreciate you. However, we have these priorities. And so we've decided that that's not the highest priority thing, but we can really appreciate the value of what you were trying to do there.

And again, even if it's something you don't want to do. So, for you, it's not that, if for you if you're going on Instagram and you know when you do the accounting that you're like, oh, I didn't want to deal with my thoughts and feelings about how annoyed I was at my sister about her text message, then you can appreciate the beauty of that too, even if that's not the action you want to take.

You're like, oh, yeah, I was totally scrolling because I didn't want to deal with my annoyance. And, of course, that's okay and I can appreciate the beauty of what my brain was trying to do there. It was trying to distract me from my feelings in the same way lots of parents distract their children from feelings with like an ice cream cone.

Ep #125: Procrastination

But also, that's not maybe who I want to be. And that's not maybe how I want to handle annoyance or whatever. So, I'm not going to judge and shame myself about that, I'm not going to call it procrastination anymore. And when that comes up, I'm going to do this other thing, which might be like, oh, when I notice I'm feeling annoyed, I'm going to get a piece of paper out and write about my feelings about it instead.

So kind of there realizing that, it's like I was saying earlier in the podcast, I like to operate from the assumption that everything we're doing, we're doing for a good and beautiful reason, even if it's not ultimately what we want to keep doing. So it's like, oh, my brain was trying to take care of me and my negative feelings in the best way it knew how to at the level it was operating at. But I actually maybe want to choose something else on purpose when I come in with my intentional brain versus my habitual brain.

Our habitual brain is made up of habits, right? Habitual habit. And a lot of those habits are things that we learned a really long time ago. So the thing where when you're having a negative emotion, your brain is like, I know, let's scroll Instagram, or I know, let's eat a cookie, or I know, let's just go read this romance novel.

That habit might be really old. It might be from like, fourth grade. I mean, not if it's Instagram because Instagram didn't exist. Well it didn't exist when I was in fourth grade, maybe it existed when you were in fourth grade. I don't know. But for me it was books, right? I was really big into reading as a kid, and I liked reading all the time.

And as a kid, I wasn't thinking I don't want to deal with my feelings, so I'll go read. But as an adult I can see that it's a habit that I developed as a way to soothe and care for myself. And so as an adult, I may still fall into that habit. But then if I were to do an accounting, like a procrastination accounting or you don't even have to think you procrastinate to do this, it can be just like an accounting of what you did with your day and why you did it. And if you discover stuff like that, you can just choose to build a new habit.

Ep #125: Procrastination

And so that's what I'm talking about when I'm saying your intentional brain. That's like the brain you're being on purpose, or the way you're teaching your brain to be on purpose. Or I almost think about it as like me in relationship with my brain. So I think about my brain as being very habitual with whatever patterns it learned. And a lot of those patterns, like I said, it learned a long time ago. So it's just doing its own thing.

And then I come in with my adult awareness and I'm like, oh, I don't think that's really doing what we want it to do. So I think we're going to make a little edit there. And then I don't have to judge and shame the brain and I don't have to judge and shame myself. I'm just like, oh, thanks for doing the best you knew how, we're just going to do it differently now.

And by not adding shame and judgment, it's actually a lot easier to change. Because when we judge and shame, again, then we want to curl up in that ball and we don't want to try new things, we don't want to take risks, and we don't want to be seen. And a lot of times we sort of dig our heels in and we're like, fuck you, you don't know me, my life's been hard, I have to do it this way, I can't change. So it kind of keeps us trapped in habits we don't even necessarily want and ways of being that aren't really working for us but we sort of dig into them.

Okay, so I think this is kind of a really different way of thinking about procrastination. And even when I've talked about procrastination on the podcast before, I think I'm usually probably talking about like, often the thing we're trying to do is going to be hard or uncomfortable. So of course, on a deep level we're like, I don't really want to do hard and uncomfortable things, so I'll just do this other thing instead.

But I think this layer that we're talking about today of like, are you even procrastinating when you say you're procrastinating? Or are you doing things that you actually want to be doing or make a certain kind of sense, but maybe you just want to be pairing them with something else or prioritizing something else. Or maybe you just want to stop judging yourself.

Ep #125: Procrastination

I think this is a really useful frame that's going to help you have a much kinder relationship with yourself and a much more enjoyable experience of your life and of your career. And because of that prioritization piece, it's going to help you get more of what you want, without you ever, ever having to be perfect to get there. And that's great.

I think that's so fun since we're all human beings. Waiting till we're perfect to have a life we enjoy is not a great plan, you already are as perfect as you're ever going to be. And you're never going to be perfect. So that's a little paradox for you, which I totally believe. We're all already 100% perfect, and we're also all never going to be perfect because we're human.

So that's what I want you to take away for today. And I'm really excited to see how this changes your relationship with yourself to your goals and your idea of procrastination and your idea of who you are as a person who gets shit done in the world.

And as ever, if this is really landing for you and you're like, fuck yeah, this is awesome, and you want to take this work deeper, I invite you to scoot on over to my website and sign up for a consult call so we can talk about what's going on in your life and how the things I teach apply to it and what it would look like for us to work together.

All right, that's what I have for you all this week. Have a lovely week, and I'll talk to you next time. Bye.

Thank you for listening to *Love Your Job Before You Leave It*. We'll have another episode for you next week. And in the meantime, if you're feeling super fired up, head on over to korilinn.com for more guidance and resources.