



JAMES
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TICKING AWAY – HOW TO OVERCOME
LAZINESS AND PROCRASTINATION

For *Mind of a Winner* readers only

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Preface – My Struggle With Laziness

Ever since I was a young kid I struggled with being lazy and unmotivated. When I came home from school I would jump straight on the computer and play video games for hours instead of doing my homework, much to the chagrin of my parents and teachers. As I went through high school and college I was one of those people who still achieved well, but lacked the motivation and drive to push myself to the limit.

When my grades started slipping a bit at college I decided it was time to put down the Xbox controller and start trying to become motivated and driven instead. Laziness was wreaking havoc in my life, and I needed a change. I read every self-help book I could find, and studied material from the likes of Tony Robbins. However, very little I tried actually made any positive difference in my life in the early stages.

At least I knew that I wanted to change, and that I wanted to overcome laziness once and for all and start living life to the full. Over the following months I started developing methods and techniques of my own (many of which did borrow from those earlier books and courses I had followed) that really made a massive change to my motivation levels, helped me to kick procrastination to the curb, and finally enabled me to beat laziness.

These days I have a better life than I could ever have imagined before. When I say I want to do something, I get it done. I wake up in the morning with a strong plan of action for my day, and I see it through until the very end. In terms of health and wealth I have become much more successful than I was before; laziness makes it hard to get off the couch and go for a run, and the chances of getting a raise when you're slacking off at work are slim too.

"Ticking Away" is my own personal blueprint to beating laziness by destroying what I colloquially refer to as the "pillars of lazy". I don't claim to be a qualified psychologist or life-coach, but I've lived through laziness and lack of motivation myself and come out the other side better than ever before. Furthermore, apart from the cost of this eBook I'm not here to sell you anything – what you are about to read is the plain truth.

I genuinely believe that if you follow the methods and techniques outlined in this eBook, then you will overcome laziness and experience a dramatic improvement in your quality of life.

Introduction – What Is Laziness?

In this day and age there is a limitless plethora of readily available distractions just waiting to take your mind off what you are supposed to be doing, and instead keep you unproductive and unmotivated. With distraction so easy to come by, and society so geared towards instant gratification as opposed to “hard graft” for results, it is little wonder that many people suffer from a condition most commonly referred to as laziness. In fact, I would go so far as to assert the existence of an epidemic of laziness

Dictionary definitions of laziness usually fall along the line of indolence; ‘inactivity from a dislike of work’ (Princeton WorldNet Search ND). However, from my own empirical observations I think that there are very few people who have a genuine dislike of working and being productive (and no, this report does not concern itself at all with accusations of laziness and indolence that are thrown at “bludgers” who feed at the government trough as opposed to working and earning for themselves).

Laziness in the 21st Century is probably more a lethal concoction of societal and personal elements, as opposed to a distinct hatred of activity. The following diagram should help you out:



Hopefully it is easy to comprehend. The laziness cocktail that we are seeking to vanquish permanently from your life consists of:

Procrastination – this is where you know what needs to be done (i.e. you are fully aware that you have an essay to complete by next week) but you put it off, finding excuses to do other things instead. Procrastination also encompasses that horrible feeling of wanting to do something, but choosing not to do it in case you don't do a good job; excuse making is a very common manifestation of this problem.

Distraction – many people would probably argue that procrastination and distraction are basically the same thing. However, procrastination is something that comes from within inside you, whereas distraction is an external factor that seeks to wrest your attention from whatever you should be doing and ensure that it is firmly placed somewhere relatively unproductive. These days most people would be familiar with the distraction of social media. For example, you might want to head to the gym but suddenly find yourself trawling through Facebook feeds or Pinterest boards; three hours later the gym is closed and you have nothing to show for it.

Lifestyle issues – okay there is probably a better label that I could use for this, but I have never claimed to be an expert on terminology so bear with me. One of the biggest causes of laziness is when there is something “wrong” with either your brain or body that is resulting in a lack of focus, zero concentration, or such low energy levels that you are unable to do anything productive. *Ticking Away* takes a look at the mind-and-body causes of laziness, in order to help you get even more out of your life; bear in mind that I am not a trained physician or psychologist, and that you should always seek proper medical advice before changing your diet, exercise, or lifestyle habits.

Now you can see the basic construct of laziness in terms of the three factors it comprises. Therefore, for the purposes of this report we shall settle on the following basic definition of laziness:

“Laziness is not doing what you are supposed to do, or want to do in life. This can be caused by distraction, procrastination, and lifestyle problems.”

Don't like my definition? I don't really care – whatever your personal viewpoint of laziness is, the information that I am about to reveal in *Ticking Away* is nonetheless going to deliver results for you.

The report is split into three main sections. Firstly, we will deal with distraction and how to overcome distractions in order to focus on the task at hand. Secondly, we will look at procrastination and effective strategies you can use to beat this common nemesis. Finally we will cover physical problems, including diet and lifestyle choices, which could be causing your “laziness”.

Before we go any further I would also like to say thanks for making the decision to purchase *Ticking Away*. I really appreciate your custom and hope that my short guide will genuinely help you. It should not take more than a couple of hours for you to read, so you have literally no excuse not to take this opportunity to change your life for the better.

Part 1 – Identifying Your Distractions

According to entrepreneur Joe Krauss, who founded Excite and JotSpot, modern social media is 'creating and encouraging a culture of distraction where we are increasingly disconnected from the people and events around us and increasingly unable to engage in long-form thinking.' (Krauss 2012). What Joe Krauss is saying will become shocking apparent when you examine your own lifestyle and habits; as a species we are increasingly dependent on distractions to actually get us through the day. This, in turn, is having a severely negative impact on our ability to engage in critical and deep thinking, as well as take action on anything that might distract us from our distractions themselves.

Of course social media is not the only form of distraction available for your laziness-inducing pleasure, although many modern distractions are based in some digital or computerized form. Think about the following list of potential distractions, and then see if you can come up with any more that fit your own life specifically:

- Television
- Magazines & books for entertainment
- Checking emails
- Texting/mobile phones
- Clutter (a cluttered working environment distracts many people from achieving to their full potential)
- Noise/music/chatter
- Video games

There are many other things that can distract you from working and conspire to breed laziness in your life. What you need to do before any progress can be made is sit down and come up with a list of the primary distractions in your life. Anything (emphasis on the thing) that is distracting you from working needs to be noted down. Grab a pen and paper and start jotting these distractions down. Focus on the most problematic ones first and then work you along from there.

Once you have collated a list of things that tend to distract you heavily from your work, it is time to move on to the next part of the Ticking Away laziness-busting method. Do not bother progressing until you are comfortable that you have every distraction possible that truly affects your ability to take action noted down.

Part 2 – Why Multitasking is a Myth (And How to Eliminate Personal Distractions)

Now that you have a big list of distractions, which are preventing you from working effectively and exacerbating the symptoms of laziness, it is time to start eliminating them from your life. But before we go any further, why is it necessary to get rid of distractions in order to vanquish laziness and procrastination forever? After all, we are supposed to be living in the age of multitasking where anybody is capable of focusing on multiple actions and objects at once while still somehow giving 100% focus and attention to each of those tasks. However, we need to stop kidding ourselves that multitasking and institutionalized work/study place distractions are a good thing. As a collective species this would be one of the best steps to boosting productivity and “getting more done”.

According to John Medina, author of the New York Times bestseller *Brain Rules*, multitasking is a myth. Although we are capable of performing multiple actions at the same time, such as talking on a cell phone while walking down the street, these actions are performed at an almost subconscious level. When it comes to actually paying attention (for example trying to write an all-important term paper for your college class) your brain is simply not capable of focusing sufficiently on multiple tasks at once (Medina 2008). Therefore, if you are trying to write that term paper while online shopping, and watching television in the background, then you are going to become terribly distracted and eventually feelings of laziness give in; it often appears easier to simply give up and allow bad habits to take control.

John Medina is not the only person to have written on the fallacious nature of multitasking. Christine Rosen, in her article ‘The Myth of Multitasking’ draws attention to what Lord Chesterfield had to say about multitasking and its negative consequences:

“There is time enough for everything in the course of the day, if you do but one thing at once, but there is not time enough in the year, if you will do two things at a time.” To Chesterfield, singular focus was not merely a practical way to structure one’s time; it was a mark of intelligence. “This steady and undissipated attention to one object, is a sure mark of a superior genius; as hurry, bustle, and agitation, are the never-failing symptoms of a weak and frivolous mind.” (Rosen 2008: p. 105)

Examine your own life; I am sure you will find it true that multitasking does not result in any great benefit. **Multitasking is just another form of distraction that can eventually lead to laziness by making it difficult to get tasks completed efficiently.** However, it is unlikely that we will ever be able to escape some form of multitasking in the digital age, especially now that smart phones and social media have us constantly connected to work or other activities.

So how do you remove as many distractions as possible from your life, as well as fight back against multitasking? This is where you have the opportunity to crush the first pillar of lazy. To start with you need to stop deliberately multitasking. It is unlikely that you will ever be able to stop this “bad habit” completely – it is too ingrained in the collective psyche to disappear any time soon. However, you should certainly aim to focus on just one thing at a time. This can imply something as simple as not answering your emails and reading an important report at the same time; read all your emails first, and then read the report second. Look for situations in your life where you are guilty of multitasking, and then make a concerted effort to only do one task at one time. If you are studying or learning new skills (for example trying to learn a language and an instrument) then ensure that you dedicate truly separate time to each. Multitasking has been

scientifically proven to result in less desirable learning outcomes (Rosen 2008). I used to be guilty of sitting in front of my computer with my guitar in one hand, and my web browser open to my history study at the same time. How on earth people can claim that kind of multitasking promotes desirable outcomes I will never know, but I was certainly a “sheep” when it came to doing it.

Multitasking also tends to combine with other common distractions, such as social media to make a deadly ticking time bomb of laziness. This is why it is so crucial to eliminate physically manifest distractions at the same time. You need to make a commitment to yourself that you will remove things that are getting in the way of you beating laziness – let’s make the first pillar of lazy fall. Do you remember that list of distractions I asked you to write down? Retrieve that list and create a plan of attack for eradicating your personal distractions using my “BPS” system:

Block – the most fundamental method for eliminating distractions is to take them out of your life. Do you find yourself playing video games late at night when you should be working? Rather than telling yourself that you can limit your consumption (come on, you’re not *that* experienced with this stuff yet) you should give your console or controller to a friend or family member, and tell them to give it back to you once you have completed your work. This kind of cold turkey stuff only works if there is no way of you actually renegeing on your decision to remove distractions. Basically you should think of blocking as utilizing any technique that suits you in such a way that it forcibly prevents a distraction from actually affecting you in the first place. For example, if you work in an office and find yourself eavesdropping as opposed to working, then invest in a pair of noise-cancelling headphones and put some tunes on a playlist. When you actually think about what I am saying here, it is really not very hard to comprehend.

Plan – having a concrete plan for what you want to do every day certainly helps with distractions. If are drifting around from task to task like a bit of tumbleweed, then you are probably going to find it hard to avoid distractions as they are easy and enjoyable to grasp upon. Start by planning out what you want to achieve every day the night before. Tell yourself that you do not have precious time to waste on diversionary distractions that amount to nothing in the grand scheme of things. Be realistic with the amount of time you have and how long it will take you to get things done as well. Planning can also help you to avoid multitasking by ensuring you have a clear pathway for your day’s focus. Remember that for our purposes multitasking is currently the enemy, so any technique you can use to nip it in the bud is great. Oh and make sure that you pay close attention to the final point – the “S” in my BPS system if you want your plan to succeed.

Satiate – distractions are an itch that we all love to scratch from time to time. The problem arises when they (and other issues like multitasking) collude to make you laziness, force bad habits of procrastination, and reduce your productivity. Therefore, you should give yourself set time each day to indulge in your favourite diversionary activities. I love playing piano, so whereas I used to try and blend piano time with work time, I now give myself 30 minutes a day to tinker the ivory. If your favourite distraction happens to be a hobby, then you will probably find yourself performing better at that as well if you have a dedicated time slot every day. If you’re the kind of person who struggles to go five minutes without checking Facebook or Twitter, then offer yourself five minutes of social media every half hour. After a week, increase the time you must wait for self-gratification to an hour, then two hours, and so on. This is kind of like applied Pavlovian conditioning really. Make sure your daily plan actually incorporates your distraction downtime as needed, but also ensure to wean yourself off it over time.

Quitting distractions and multitasking cold turkey is hard. I've tried it many times before and failed miserably, and so have most others. That is why you need to have a system in place, such as "BPS" (block, plan, satiate) in order to make the demolition of the first pillar of lazy more simple. Remember that only you can know the true distractions in your life. I've been harking on a bit about social media because it is a common example in this day and age, but remember that other things may trouble you. Hone in on those and then follow the BPS system, which is undeniably very simple, in order to eliminate your distractions.

Part 3 – What Causes Procrastination?

You have now got the “straight dope” on why multitasking is a myth (borrowing from urban youth lingo there in order to try and appeal to a hip young audience as well) and why it leads to procrastination. You have also learned how to deal with distractions that can plague your life and exacerbate laziness to a terrible degree.

However, knowing about this is completely pointless unless you understand the causes of procrastination, which in turn contribute to laziness. If multitasking was the only factor behind procrastination and laziness, then the solution would be extremely simple (just stop multitasking and start working on one project or task at a time until you are satisfied with the result).

Other causes of procrastination also tend to vary from person to person. Pay close attention and see which of the following factors relates most accurately to your own life experiences. As you are reading use a pen and paper to note down which of the following causes of procrastination apply to you the most.

Perfectionism – although you were probably told from a young age that perfectionism is a desirable trait, it is important to realize that it can also have negative consequences in terms of causing procrastination, poor time management, and lazy behaviour. There is absolutely nothing wrong with wanting to do a good job. In fact, anyone who wants to do a good job at something should be commended fully, no matter how small that task may be. The problem with perfectionism is when it becomes part of a vicious cycle of thinking “I can’t do this perfectly yet, so I won’t do it at all.” Perfectionism is a black and white worldview, and if you are a perfectionist you probably know that feeling of believing you can either succeed or fail at a task; there is no middle ground. Basically, perfectionists do not take action because making their work or return on effort perfect seems too daunting or difficult (Dachis 2011).

Fear of the outcome – in my experience this is one of the most common and devastating causes of procrastination. If you worry that you cannot do something right, then you are likely to procrastinate. Although this sounds very similar to perfectionism it is actually different; whereas perfectionists worry about getting everything absolutely 100% right, if you simply have a fear of the outcome then you are worried that any action of yours will have a negative consequence. This can be one of the hardest causes of procrastination to deal with, but with the right attitude you can overcome this problem that leads to very chronic laziness.

Difficulty in the face of complexity – Whereas some people are extraordinarily good at coping and taking decisive action in the face of complexity, you may be one of those people who is the complete opposite. Don’t panic though; crumbling and procrastinating in the face of complexity is not an inherently bad thing. The world needs people who are able to take their time to sort through a complex situation and arrive at a measured conclusion. However, difficulty in the face of complexity becomes a real problem when it renders you completely incapable of doing, and only capable of thinking (which is the real essence of chronic procrastination).

Lack of motivation and focus – No matter what it is caused by, a lack of motivation and focus is one of the worst causes of procrastination, and therefore laziness. In part 5 of *Ticking Away* we will examine how your lifestyle choices can influence focus and motivation,

and what you can do to become more driven. In part 4 you will learn about overcoming other causes of poor motivation and focus by using the incredible power of visualization and subliminal programming. If you have little drive and focus, then you will struggle to get things done; the good news is that I will teach you a number of extremely effective techniques you can use to counter poor motivation and focus.

Reliance on downward counterfactuals and trivialization of tasks – Downward counterfactuals and trivialization of tasks sound really confusing, but it's important to understand them to see if they are causing procrastination and laziness in your life. Put simply, both are a method of masking and internalizing procrastination, and (wrongly) telling yourself that you do not actually have a problem to deal with at all. Downward counterfactual thinking is where you compare your situation with something or someone that could be even worse. For example, you might say 'I didn't actually need to go on a run today, because there are other people in the world who are less healthy than I am'. If this concept of downward counterfactual thinking still confuses you, then frame it in your mind as negative thoughts that are often driven by anxiety, and which focus on the "what could have been" aspects of life. According to a 2004 study by Fuschia Sirois, published in the *British Journal of Social Psychology*, reliance on downward counterfactuals is directly correlated with a greater incidence of potentially damaging thought behaviours, including procrastination (Sirois 2004). Trivialization of tasks is another psychological cause of procrastination and laziness. Although trivializing actions can be useful for people who are scared or anxious about doing something, for those of us who are prone to procrastination it can be very dangerous for productivity.

Inability to find a starting point– This is a very simple concept to understand. If you procrastinate because you find it difficult to actually find a starting point for things you need to do, then you fall into this category. Imagine you have a big essay to write, but you don't know whether you should research, plan, or just start writing first. In my experience the inability to find a starting point is one of the most common causes of procrastination, and contributes to laziness for many people. It is also very easy to characterize!

Thinking in the future – If you constantly tell yourself that tomorrow is better than today for taking action, then it stands to reason that you are going to struggle with procrastination. While some actions and activities are best suited to deliberative planning and careful consideration, procrastination can still be caused by relying on so-called 'delay statements' (Knaus et al 2010: p.40). Think about your own life and experiences with procrastination and laziness; do you tend to find yourself believing that tomorrow (or any given time in the future) is better suited to getting started? I was guilty of this particular problem for an extremely long time. I would always tell myself that starting my essays and assignments tomorrow would be better, because I was going to be in a superior state of mind and ready for greater results. However, I eventually came to realize that thinking in the future pervaded much of my life and caused serious problems. If thinking in the future is something that applies to you, then you need to write this particular cause of procrastination down on your list.

By now you should have a list of two or three things that are causing procrastination, and therefore laziness in your life. If you've procrastinated writing this list down, then there is no hope at all for you (I'm joking of course, there is still hope!). Keep reading on to discover how you can wrestle the procrastination bull by the horns. You will soon be on your way to

banishing laziness from your life forever; you've got the basic knowledge, and now all you need are the right techniques and strategies.

Part 4 – Beating Procrastination (And Stamping Out Laziness)

In this section of *Ticking Away* you are going to learn how to overcome each of the procrastination factors identified in the previous chapter. If you're pressed for time, then I suggest that you skim read this section to zero in on the solutions that apply to you specifically. However, for the most holistic procrastination-busting experience make sure you study the following passages very closely.

You also need to be prepared to put a great deal of effort in now. We have reached the stage of *Ticking Away* that is going to require the most personal dedication and inner strength. You have already learned how to eliminate distractions from your life; one pillar of laziness has crumbled thus far. It is now time to soldier on and make even more drastic changes to your life, which will result in the procrastination pillar of laziness being destroyed.

Remember that list of procrastination causes you wrote down? It's time to work through your list and see what strategies and techniques you can use to beat procrastination once and for all.

How to beat perfectionism

Perfectionism is a curse if it prevents you from getting things done. Chronic perfectionism can definitely contribute to laziness. But what can you do to overcome this problem while still maintaining high standards of work? Do you have to sacrifice quality in the name of vanquishing laziness and procrastination?

Of course not! You can rewire your focus on perfectionism to change it from being a negative aspect of your life to a positive one. What you need to do is break away from contingent-worth thinking, which is a manner of thinking in which you see your successes and failures as concrete measures of your personal worth. Contingent-worth thinking fosters a negative manifestation of perfectionism because it leads you to think that if you do not do a good job, then you are essentially a "worthless" person (I hate using the term worthless, but in this instance it sheds light on how relentless perfectionism can cause big problems in terms of procrastination and laziness).

Basically, in order to beat perfectionism **you need to stop telling yourself that your self-worth is derived from the quality of your work or effort**. Some days you will write an amazing essay, or deliver an incredible report to your boss; and other times things will simply not go your way. This is an unalienable fact of life. As long as you give every task in front of you 100%, then you need to stop worrying so much about the outcome (unless it could be life-threatening to yourself or somebody else). The sky is not going to cave in if you just take action and write that all-important essay now; procrastinating and being lazy because you are worried you cannot do a proper job will get you nowhere in life.

Stop fearing the outcome

If you recall you learned that fearing the outcome is another key cause of procrastination, which is the most damaging "pillar of lazy". For as long as you are worried that your actions will have a negative or undesired outcome, you will remain stuck in a state of procrastinatory limbo where laziness is rife. Fear of failure is a form of self-sabotage that saps energy and leaves you unable to work effectively.

How can you stop fearing the outcome? It's not actually as difficult as you might think. The most important action you can take to overcome a fear of the outcome is to analyse all potential outcomes for a situation. You'll notice that in all but the most extreme of situations (i.e. where there is the potential for injury, death, or danger) most potential outcomes are really not that bad. Imagine you are procrastinating about asking your boss for a raise, because you fear the outcome that he or she might say no. However, even if your boss was to say no, you haven't actually lost anything apart from suffering some embarrassment. More positive outcomes including getting the raise, or reaching some form of compromise like performance based pay on top of your regular wage. In most cases you will find after analysing potential outcomes that there are more positive than negative ones. Thinking more positively about life also helps with overcoming the fear of failure and negative outcomes.

Remember that many successful people have "failed" at some stage in their life. Warren Buffet was rejected from Harvard University, and Richard Branson is a school dropout. One of the biggest differences between those who are successful, motivated, and driven, and those who are lazy is that successful people work with the outcome – others fear it. No matter what your outcomes might be you need to develop contingency plans for dealing with them. If you are truly worried about what might arise from any given action you take, then work on creating effective Plan B's that will help you out of trouble.

Let's revisit our example of asking your boss for a raise. Imagine that you were relying on the windfall from that raise to pay for some urgent bills. Analysing the outcomes tells us that if you do not ask for a raise, then you are guaranteed not to get one. However, in the event that you ask and do not receive, then you should have a contingency plan. Perhaps you could pick up some extra hours, or you have some spare stuff lying around the house that you could sell on eBay to raise quick cash? Develop the contingency plan before you take action, so you have absolutely no excuses to fear the outcome and procrastinate, which in turn leads to laziness.

Finding simplicity in the face of complexity

Another common cause of procrastination and laziness is struggling with complexity. If it seems like there is too much to do, or there is no clear path forward, then it will seem easier to just do nothing and not have to worry. When life gets a little too heavy, procrastination can set in. My cousin was very guilty of this when training to be a teacher; he had an enormous workload of assignments and projects to complete, and was cracking under the pressure of getting such a complex array of tasks done. Instead of taking action he simply gave up, and sat in his room reading books until all his deadlines passed. Needless to say he now has to repeat an entire year of teaching practice.

Here's a simple analogy that might help you to understand this concept. Imagine you walk into a gym and there is every piece of exercise equipment under the sun to choose from. Presented with such a smorgasbord of fitness options requires making a complex decision; do you want to go on the treadmill first, and then the exercise bike... maybe you'd like to start with some medicine ball exercises instead. Faced with complexity it is a fairly natural reaction to simply not know where to begin, and then put in a half-assed effort in return. However, if you walked into that gym and there was only a treadmill available, then it is immediately apparent what sort of exercise you should do first.

If complexity causes procrastination and laziness in your life, then you have two choices. You can either create a situation wherein you only have limited and simple choices (think about the aforementioned treadmill analogy) or more realistically you must devise a plan of action when faced with complexity. Instead of procrastinating, you need to pick one thing to focus on first and then see that through to completion. “Analysis paralysis”, which is the inability to make logical decisions and actions when faced with a complex set of choices, is a true killer of motivation and productivity. You can beat analysis paralysis in the face of complexity by sticking doggedly to the completion of one thing at a time.

Working with a lot of Internet entrepreneurs and affiliate marketers, procrastination and laziness at the hands of complexity is something I see very often. Because there are so many different methods for making money online it’s hard to know which to pick from. 99% of budding “Internet marketers” suffer from analysis paralysis (and a hint of shiny object syndrome) and simply jump from one method to another until they burn out and simply give up. The successful ones are those who break down their choices and home in on one method only, seeing it through until completion.

How do you pick what to do from a complex set of choices? Naturally, you should focus on the most critical or important thing first – usually this will come in the form of a looming deadline or due date. For example, why start an essay due in two months now, when you have one that is to be completed in a week? If faced with complexity that does not have any obvious starting point, then you should tackle whatever would be easiest or most suited to your skills first. It is my humble opinion that by tackling easier tasks before going on to more difficult ones you will build confidence, which in turn results in more desirable outcomes from challenging situations. Of course if all else fails and you’re simply stuck like a deer in the headlights in the face of complex decision-making challenges, then go old school. Put all your options on individual strips of paper, stick them in a hat, and then roll with whatever one you pick out.

Of course sticking doggedly to simplicity can be difficult without focus and motivation, which means you need to pay close attention as we cover this topic next.

Becoming focused and motivated

If a lack of motivation or focus is causing procrastination in your life, then pay close attention. This is one of those topics where I could write screeds upon screeds of information about the background issues leading to poor focus, lack of concentration, and insufficient motivation (the physical causes of these problems will be discussed in a later chapter) but instead of boring you with the “why”, let us delve straight into the “how”. You can rewire your brain to improve focus and motivation with a holistic approach and the right techniques. You have already learned how to remove the distractions of multitasking from your life at the start of *Ticking Away* so you are already on the right track for massively improved focus, but there are other methods you can use to make yourself even more driven.

Start by creating well-defined goals. Be as specific in your goal setting as possible; do not fall into the trap of creating goals that you could easily weasel your way out of under pressure. Having a defined set of goals is the most fundamental aspect of effective focus and motivation. Without goals you cannot truly know what you are working towards. If you do not know what you are striving for, then how can you be motivated or focused without a definite end point? Hopefully the importance of goal setting needs no more explanation!

Once you have your goals organized and noted down, you need to start visualizing their completion. This might sound like a whole bunch of new age nonsense, but visualization truly does work for increasing motivation, concentration, and focus levels. Basically you want to imagine yourself completing the goals you just set. Successful visualization is not as simple as closing your eyes and saying “I’ve just completed my goals”. Instead, you must focus very intently on the physically manifest aspects of what it will feel like. For example, if you have been procrastinating and lazy about starting a new running routine to get into shape, and your goal is to go for your first run today, then you need to visualize exactly how you think that run transpire. Imagine the clothes you will be wearing, the layout of the streets you will be running, how puffed you will be feeling by the end of it – authentic visualization leaves no stone unturned.

Finally, in order to become truly motivated and focused you must concentrate your energies into completing just one task at a time. Procrastination and laziness are exacerbated by jumping from one thing to the next. When you are truly focused and driven you will not fall into this trap, but instead strive to finish one activity or goal before starting the next. As I have stressed a number of times already, multitasking does us no favours and is simply a foolish “feel-good” construct that actually delivers more harm than benefit. By removing personal distractions from your life, hunkering down onto one task at a time, setting goals, and visualizing success you WILL become more focused and motivated.

Beating downward counterfactual arguments

One of the more obscure causes of procrastination and laziness that I mentioned is falling back on to downward counterfactual arguments to tell yourself that the outcome could have been graver. Downward counterfactual arguments have been the subject of numerous scientific studies, which all tend to come to the conclusion that they are a bad cause of procrastination and laziness (Moss 2011). Imaging more negative alternatives to past events is not a good strategy if you want to become one of the super-motivated “elite” of this world. Interestingly enough, upward counterfactual thinking (thinking that things could have been better than they were) is associated with the opposite of downward counterfactuals. Those who engage in upward counterfactuals are more likely to encounter personal development and progress, and less likely to suffer from procrastination (ibid). Therefore, you need to reverse your downwards counterfactuals to upwards ones. Instead of telling yourself that things could have worked out worse for you, tell yourself that they could have worked out better. This upward style of thinking can cause regret and anxiety in some people, but is generally associated with a greater level of success. For example, if you got 50% on a test do not tell yourself that you could have failed. Instead, tell yourself that if you had studied hard and not spent two months straight playing Xbox every night, you might have got 90%.

De-trivializing tasks

Trivializing tasks is another common cause of procrastination and laziness. Telling yourself that the things you need to do are really not *that* important is not a good method for achieving at your peak. De-trivializing tasks is really just case of understanding that ignoring them will not make them go away. You can tell yourself that your final term paper is not all that important, but deep down you know that it is crucial to getting a good grade and could have important consequences for the rest of your life. If you find de-trivializing tasks difficult, then the most effective technique I can suggest is to jot down the potential consequences of

not taking action. Think long-term, and you might suddenly realize why you should stop trivializing.

Finding a starting point

If you read the paragraphs on finding simplicity in the face of complexity, then you will already have a good understanding of how to find a starting point. Remember that the lack of a starting point is one of the most common causes of procrastination, because without knowing where to begin you cannot actually do anything. Therefore, without knowing your starting points you are always going to suffer from laziness.

For the sake of getting my point across I shall repeat it once more: The most effective way to find a starting point is to begin on the most important or urgent task you have. Only you have the power to decide how to rank the importance of things you need to do in your life (I would love to do it for you, I cannot get inside your brain through the digital pages of an eBook!). There is no other better method for hunkering down and getting stuff done than simply doing the most urgent thing first. This should ALWAYS be your first port of call for goal setting and action taking.

Thinking for today, not for tomorrow

The final cause of procrastination (and therefore laziness) that we need to discuss in this section is the problem of tomorrow thinking. If you recall this is where you tell yourself that tomorrow is better than today for taking action and getting stuff done. This becomes a vicious cycle of procrastination and laziness, because it is always easier to say that tomorrow is “better” than today for doing something when you know another tomorrow will follow!

Therefore, you need to rewire your brain to tell yourself that today is better than tomorrow for taking action. First up you need to break everything down into manageable chunks; you are more likely to take action today if you know you do not have a mountain to climb. I always stress the importance of breaking every single thing you do down into much smaller parts, and then tackling those parts one at a time. Virtually everything you will have to do in your life can be turned into a series of smaller actions; pick one of these smaller actions, and then do it today. Think of that essay you need to write as a series of small paragraphs, or your mounting office paperwork as a bunch of individual little tasks. As soon as you stop thinking on the “micro-level” and start looking at tasks as being the sum of their parts, it becomes very tempting to procrastinate because it appears significantly harder to get started.

The most in thinking for today instead of tomorrow is reminding yourself that every day you procrastinate and put something off is one less day you have to complete it. Although it might sound a bit morbid, none of us are promised a single day on this Earth so you had better make the most of every one you are given. Eventually you will run out of days, which in turn means that today is always better than tomorrow for getting started. The whole reason I decided to give this eBook its title, *Ticking Away*, is to invoke the fact that **laziness and procrastination literally rob you of precious moments of your life**. Take a moment to sit back and digest that important fact – it might just be the kick up the backside you need to spur you into taking action today, as opposed to tomorrow.

Putting it all together

What you have just read is one of the most detailed and difficult sections of *Ticking Away*. If you've read deeply enough into what I have shared with you, then have all the tools you need to overcome procrastination. Setting goals, visualizing success, breaking down your tasks into their constituent parts, focusing on one task at a time, understanding that you only have limited time in your life; these are all important pieces of the procrastination-solving puzzle. Once you put them together you will beat procrastination, and destroy the second pillar of lazy. You've already discovered how to remove distractions, and now you have beaten procrastination. This only leaves the physical aspects of laziness, such as poor diet and lack of sleep, to deal with. You are on the home stretch now, and the next section is also very straightforward to follow.

Part 5 – Can Your Lifestyle Really Cause Laziness?

By now you have the knowledge and resources to remove distractions, and stop procrastinating. This one-two combo is already extremely powerful, but you're here to completely defeat laziness, aren't you? Therefore, you need to learn about how lifestyle factors can play a massive role in causing laziness, and how tweaking your lifestyle can result in huge improvements in terms of action taking, motivation, and success.

The simple truth is that lifestyle factors can cause, or at least contribute to the problem. If the way you live results in you having poor energy levels, feeling tired, unfocused, and potentially even depressed, then it stands to reason that you will be lazy. This is a very black and white issue.

The first thing to cover is sleep. If you do not get enough sleep, then you will feel tired. If you feel tired, then you are unlikely to perform at your peak and are more inclined to not do anything. Unfortunately, busy modern lifestyles and the pressures of balancing work and play make getting enough sleep very difficult. In my experience this problem is very common with college students and those who do shift work.

Do you have a healthy, nutritious diet that is full of fruits and vegetables? When was the last time you had any "brain food", such as salmon or leafy green vegetables? Even if you are on a limited budget it is possible to feed your body with the types of foods that promote energy, vitality, focus, and inner drive. Diet plays a huge role in causing laziness. When I was a college student I used to pile my plate high with processed carbohydrates, sugary snacks, fatty fried foods, and all other sorts of typical Western eats. Little wonder then that I never had enough energy or drive to actually do anything.

Exercise (or the lack thereof) is another lifestyle factor that can lead to laziness. Unfortunately this is also a complicated issue, as studies have revealed that people often blame laziness for not wanting to exercise – there is a dichotomous relationship in force here. A study published in the *Journal of Exercise Physiology* found that the second most common barrier to exercise, as expressed in an open ended questionnaire of college students, was laziness. 20.4% of respondents answered in a manner that indicated feelings of laziness were responsible for a lack or total absence of exercise. However, 18.3% of respondents indicated that they did not exercise due to a lack of motivation, and 15.8% believed their lack of exercise was due to tiredness or a general lack of energy (Ebben & Brudzynski 2008: p. 10).

Supplementation can also be a factor that alleviates laziness. Unfortunately the state of modern diets and lifestyle choices means that you might not be getting all the nutrients, vitamins, and minerals that your body needs to perform at your peak. In the next section of this eBook, where I give you my personal blueprint for a laziness-free life, you will learn about some of the best supplements you can take to boost your energy levels, help you focus, and make you less lazy by improving your physical and mental health (there are also other beneficial side effects including greater memory retention to look forward to).

Legitimate medical conditions, such as thyroid problems or depression can also lead to laziness. It is beyond my scope of knowledge to deal with these issues in *Ticking Away*, as I do not claim to be a qualified medical professional and do not wish to give any false or potential hazardous information pertaining to important medical issues. If you suspect that

you have some kind of genuine medical complaint that is causing laziness, then start by [reading this basic article](#). From there you should be able to determine whether your situation warrants the attention of a physician or other medical expert. Certainly there is evidence to suggest that extreme laziness could actually be a genuine “disease”. A group of Australian scientists identified in 2006 *motivational deficiency disorder* as a form of extreme laziness and total apathy (Moynihan 2006: p.745). Whether this discovery becomes accepted into medical and psychological orthodoxy remains to be seen, although it has not gained an enormous amount of traction in the past seven years.

Part 6 – Blueprint for a Laziness-Free Life

It is clear that lifestyle choices can have a direct impact on your energy levels, concentration and focus, and exacerbate (or reduce) feelings of procrastination and decisiveness. This is useful knowledge, but somewhat pointless unless you actually have a plan to put the right lifestyle choices into action. Just in case you thought I might leave you hanging at this critical juncture don't worry; in the following passages we are going to explore a blueprint for a laziness-free life that will not cost you a fortune, while also improving your quality of life at the same time.

Bear in mind once more that no advice in this eBook should be construed as personalized medical or psychological advice from a trained specialist. Always consult your physician before changing your diet or embarking on any new exercise regime. If you make any of the changes suggested and feel any adverse side effects, then stop immediately!

The blueprint for a laziness-free life requires rewiring your current lifestyle choices. By tweaking the following crucial factors in your life, you will be able to make drastic changes that through poor focus and procrastination out the window, and which make beating laziness a breeze. You need to ensure that you are following these guidelines:

Get more exercise

Exercise is absolutely crucial for beating laziness. I know I highlighted that study where many respondents said that feeling lazy was a hindrance to exercise, but this is a “procrastinator's mind-set”. Instead of saying that because you are lazy you cannot exercise, you must flip the equation and tell yourself that you are lazy because you are not getting enough exercise. It is common knowledge that even light exercise releases feel good hormones (endorphins) in your body, which makes you feel great. When you are feeling good about yourself, you are more likely to get things done. It is beyond the scope of this eBook to discuss the cardiovascular benefits of exercise (I'm sure there are plenty of books on the marketplace on this subject) the mental benefits of increased physical activity cannot be understated. Many studies have shown the immense benefits of exercise in terms of reduced incidence of depression, greater self-confidence, superior motivation levels, and improved cognitive function (Fletcher *et al* 1996: p.857-862).

Getting more exercise into your daily routine is just a case of “manning up” and doing it, provided you do not have any form of pre-existing medical condition that could cause you injury or harm. Once you have checked with your doctor or physician that you are good to go, then it is time to start exercising. There are loads of good workout routines that you can find online to suit any tastes or preferences. Some people like doing weights, others enjoy swimming, you might prefer running, and the next guy could have a passion for boxing. At

the end of the day you need to decide which form(s) of exercise appeal to you the most and then stick with them. It does not really matter how you exercise, just that you start doing so immediately.

One thing to consider before embarking on a laziness-busting exercise regimen is the cost of gym memberships, workout equipment, and sports gear. I box 5 times a week and hit the gym regularly, and this adds up to a national debt every year – something which you may not be able to afford, or wish to spend. Therefore, I always encourage people who come to me for advice on exercise and laziness to look into bodyweight/calisthenics exercises alongside a regular running program. This gives you effective cardio training with great resistance workouts to burn more fat and build muscle (resistance training is generally a more efficient form of exercise). It is more difficult to find reliable information and routines for calisthenics training, but most people have great results with military style workout regimens that involve all sorts of body squats, sit ups, and press ups.

Seek better sleep

Although most people will simply say that getting more sleep can cure laziness, what is in fact more crucial is the quality of your sleep. This does encompass the amount you are sleeping, but also whether you are deriving maximum benefits from it. Basically, you need to find the optimal sleep pattern for your body that delivers maximum energy levels. To begin you really want to have a week in front of you where you have little in the way of work or study and can afford to sleep in. What you need to do is go to bed when you are tired, and then wake up when your body does so by its own accord; not when the alarm clock goes off. Repeating this process over several days has the effect of resetting your internal clock, and should notice a rapid improvement in energy levels as well as an elevated mood and greater cognitive performance. I'm not suggesting for a moment that you follow this pattern forever, as few people have a lifestyle that enables them to sleep whenever they wish (and excessive sleeping is actually a sign of laziness anyway).

Once you have “reset” your body's sleep clock you need to slowly adjust to your daily schedule. You can shave sleep time off either end – either go to bed later or get up earlier – until you find a situation wherein you are getting sufficient sleep but also not jeopardizing the completion of your daily tasks. At this stage you may hit a hurdle and find that it is impossible to get enough sleep within the framework of your daily grind. This is where you need to get creative; you either have to find ways to get your work done faster, so that you have more time to sleep, or you must look for alternative ways to cram more sleep in. This book isn't about boosting your productivity per se, so I will leave it to you to research techniques and tactics you can use to get more work done in a shorter period of time. On the other hand, if you want to sneak more sleep in to a busy schedule then you should try power napping. Just a 20-30 minute nap at your desk, in your parked car, or on the couch can lead to a massive boost in energy levels and productivity. Power naps are also a great alternative to tanking up on caffeinated beverages, which can lead to short energy bursts followed by unpleasant crashes. Napping regularly also reduces stress (caffeine can increase stress) and enhances your memory. If possible you should try power napping between the hours of 1pm to 3pm, because that is when your body should be at its peak receptiveness to sleep (Soong 2011).

By now you have the knowledge to establish an effective sleep pattern that fits around your lifestyle. However, you should also take steps to improve the quality of your sleep. Firstly, ensure that you turn off all the lights when you go to sleep, and then seek out natural light as

soon as you wake up – opening the curtains is great way to start your day. You should also try to eliminate sources of noise and distraction from your sleeping environment or bedroom. I am a strong advocate of eliminating laptop/tablet/smartphone use in bed, as well as ensuring that a TV does not creep in. These devices often lead to people staying up late and missing out on valuable sleep.

Correct diet for improved cognitive function and focus

So you have got your sleep pattern in order, and you are exercising regularly. Now it is time to look at a diet that can actually help you to overcome laziness. If your current diet consists of more than 50% “bad stuff” (fast food, junk food, sugary snacks, crisps, soda, alcohol, cakes, and fried foods) then start by going on a brief wellness cleanse, more commonly referred to as a detox. Once you have flushed your body of the toxins and other nasty things that can lead to low energy levels and poor motivation, it is time to rebuild your diet in a healthier fashion.

Basically, the biggest problem with modern Western diets is that they offer too many calories, and too few nutrients. This is why the overall trend in America, UK, Canada, and other Western nations is rampantly increasing obesity rates – most people are getting enough food, but are simply eating the wrong types of it. I am a staunch believer that poor diet is one of the biggest contributing factors to laziness, because it results in reduced energy levels, mood issues, and impaired cognitive function. When you are eating for pleasure, as opposed to performance, you will never truly perform at your peak in terms of productivity, motivation, and effectiveness.

So how can you eat to beat laziness? [This interesting article](#) claims that high fat diets can cause laziness. However, the study backing this article extrapolated its data from laboratory tests on rodents, which have rather different dietary needs to humans. Realistically there is little wrong with eating a high fat diet, provided you get your fats from healthy sources like almonds, walnuts, oily fish, and very lean meat. Most high fat diets are the opposite of this; hamburger meat, fried foods, vegetable oils used to preserve snacks – the sources of fat that currently exist in your diet are probably very bad for you. As long as you exercise regularly and get your cholesterol levels monitored, you should not worry too much about your fat intake (obviously limit saturated fats because they can have a negative impact on your heart).

In holistic terms the right diet for overcome laziness and boosting energy levels does not need to be set in stone. I'm not about to give you a detailed meal plan that accounts for every atom that enters your mouth. It is my belief that highly restrictive diets are not conducive to success, because they restrict you from leading a normal life. Instead you should look at incorporating as many healthy options into your diet as possible, while still allowing yourself the occasional treat and ensuring that what you eat is within budget. To keep it as simple as possible ensure that you eat leafy green vegetables, fresh fruit, wholegrains, legumes/nuts, and fish on a regular basis (ideally every day). The most crucial aspect of tweaking your diet to give you more energy and motivation is getting rid of crappy junk food. Refined carbs and cheap fats are terrible for your body and brain. Provided you ditch those, and then invest the money you save into healthy alternatives you should be good to go.

Ensure adequate supplementation

One last topic to cover in terms of tweaking your lifestyle for the best possible energy levels, focus, and cognitive function is supplementation. You don't need to be a bodybuilder or extreme athlete to benefit from a few good supplements. You may already take a multivitamin (and if you don't, then go straight to your local drugstore and stock up as the benefits are very good). However, what we are interested in are supplements that have been proven to aid focus and energy. When you are more focused, and when you have more energy, then you are less likely to be lazy.

Of course there is an endless litany of companies out there who are willing to sell their supposed silver bullet supplement solution that will have you more energetic than a March hare. It would probably take me another ten thousand words to even scratch the surface of all the different supplements, herbs, vitamins, and tonics on the market that claim to offer the benefit we're seeking. Instead of covering them all let me recommend a few things that work extremely well for me, and for others that I have recommended them to. If you want a more detailed discussion of the various supplements available to you that can help to overcome laziness, improve energy, and supercharge motivation, then [check out the supplements category on my blog](#).

Because supplementation can get expensive very fast and we live in increasingly expensive times I'm going to recommend that you start with two simple supplements. These are bacopa and B group vitamins. Bacopa, also known as Brahmi, has been used for hundreds of years in traditional medicine, and has the primary benefit of increasing memory. In particular it can be very effective at preventing you from forgetting newly acquired information (Roodenrys et al 2002: p. 279-281). Bacopa also has the benefit of increasing energy levels in most people who take it (Oliff 2011). You can buy a whole load of it cheap on Amazon, although you might like to [read this blog post](#) of mine where I discuss the best brands and value-for-money bacopa options. B group vitamins should need little introduction, and are very affordable. Look for a holistic B vitamin supplement that offers a little bit of everything. Many people are deficient in B vitamins without realizing it – if you have a poor diet or are on any form of medication, then you definitely need to be supplementing with this important group (Griffin ND).

By tweaking your lifestyle using the strategies you have just learned, you will knock down the final pillar of laziness! You've already learned how to remove distraction from your life, procrastination is a thing of the past, and now your body will be on the right track for hugely improved energy levels, focus and drive. It is now just a case of putting together everything you have learned in *Ticking Away* and sticking with it long enough to see results. I'm not promising that you will wake up tomorrow and feel like conquering the world, but with enough time, practice, and dedication you WILL see the positive changes in your life.

Part 7 – Conclusion and Recommended Reading

To conclude *Ticking Away*, I would like to thank you once more for taking the time to read my eBook. I hope you apply my three-pronged strategy for eliminating laziness from your life forever; if you take the time to absorb the lessons within these digital pages, and apply them with a fervent passion to your life, then you will see results.

Just remember to:

- 1) Remove external distractions from your life,
- 2) Visualize your goals and rewire your mind-set to beat procrastination
- 3) Ensure that you have the right lifestyle choices to support action taking, focus, and high levels of energy.

If you can get these three crucial factors in line, then you cannot go too far wrong. Beating laziness and finding incredible inner motivation and drive is something that literally everybody can do with the right approach and mind-set. I wish you all the best of luck and hope that you have learned something truly useful reading my book.

Want More Info? Visit www.whyamilazy.com

This is my personal blog and website where you will find a whole raft of articles, blog posts, and instructional videos that will help you to quash laziness and procrastination forever. There is also much attention paid to the critical issue of time management, which I will probably cover in a future title as well. Finally, you can visit any page of my site and download a free guide to beating procrastination using an alternative method, called *Stop Waiting*. I recommend that you [read this article](#) before downloading it. Become one of the regular 2000+ visitors who frequent Why Am I Lazy every week and see how easy it really is to change your life for the better with the right self-improvement methods.

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Here's a brief list of works and websites that I consulted for research and citation purposes while writing *Ticking Away*. This bibliography should be up-to-date, but do not be surprised if web links disappear in due course (that is often the way with the Internet). If you think I have missed something, then please let me know and I will amend the bibliography immediately.

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