

Ep #181: Proactivation



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With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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Welcome to *The Life Coach School Podcast*, where it's all about real clients, real problems, and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Proactivation. What? You've never heard that word before? I made it up. I love this word. My highly educated clients point out that I make up words that don't exist, and I'm convinced they exist, but they tell me that they're not. And they're Ivy League educated and I just roll my eyes at them. We have fun with it.

But I wanted a word that was the opposite of procrastination, and I thought proactivation is the perfect word. Proactivation. The opposite of procrastination. To procrastinate is to delay or to postpone something, and what's fascinating is that we're good at procrastinating on things that will give us long-term pleasure, and we're terrible at procrastinating on things that give us short-term pleasure, right? We're so into that instant gratification.

So if we were able to change this around, we create the life that we keep dreaming about. Proactive means that we're causing something to happen versus reacting to something.

So I want you to think about your dream. And I want you to think about what I have been calling your dream excuse. What is your dream excuse? What is your dream delay? What is the reason why you haven't achieved your dream? You do have an excuse, and you do have a delay.

You are procrastinating achieving your dream. Literally, right? You are in the process of not doing your dream. That's what procrastination is. It's the process of not doing something that you want to be doing.

Now, most of us procrastinate until we get right up to the point where there's a lot of pressure and then we produce something in a very short amount of time. And as I've talked about on previous podcasts, what I want you to do is reverse that.

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I want you to still do the thing in the high-pressure short amount of time, but I just want you to do it ahead of time instead of at the last minute. Instead of thinking, "That to do on Friday", I want you to think that it's due today at 5, so you're going to get it done ahead of time.

But your brain will tell you, "You have plenty of time, you don't have to do that now, you should relax now." That's what your brain will tell you, right? Remember the motivational triad. Your brain, if it's left up to its own survival devices, if you do not use your prefrontal cortex to plan, it's always going to choose to seek pleasure, avoid pain, and to be efficient.

What's the most efficient thing to do is nothing. Don't do anything. Your brain, as its primitiveness, will only go and seek out pain when our survival depends on it. And since our survival depends so little on it now, we don't want to have to wait until we get to those dire straits in order to motivate ourselves to get out and do something.

So you can use your prefrontal cortex to override this tendency of your brain. And so the way that you become proactive, with proactivation, instead of procrastination is you do it all ahead of time. So for example, I am recording this podcast for you guys in August, and you will be listening to it in September. So that's proactivation, right? I'm recording all my podcasts ahead of time, I will have them all done.

I'm going to be traveling to California, back to my old stomping grounds to teach a life coach certification. And while I'm there, I don't want to be focused on recording podcasts, I don't want to be distracted from my students that are there. I like to be fully present with my students when I'm with them, and also when I go back to my room at the end of the day, I want to be thinking about them. I want to be generating ideas for them. I want to be thinking about their coaching issues. So I don't want to have to be thinking about other things.

So by being proactive and getting all of this done, I give myself that freedom to be completely present with my students. And that is something that I want to offer to you as one of the master skill sets of mental health.

[The Life Coach School Podcast](#) with Brooke Castillo

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Being able to be proactive is how you create in your life, instead of being reactive.

So you want to create your situations as much as possible. Most people spend their lives reacting to situations because what happens is they procrastinate all of the great ideas that they have. How many of you have had a great idea for something and then saw someone else make it come to life and make all sorts of money on it?

Right? We procrastinate. We delay. We seek our present comfort instead of being proactive, and so we end up reacting to our situations instead of creating them. What I teach my students constantly is create your life ahead of time. Do not be locked into the reactive mode. Think about your future, versus thinking about your past.

Procrastination does not allow for you to create your future. Proactivation is constantly creating your future ahead of time, and it's such a lovely feeling to arrive in your present moment, having already taken care of it. That's what proactivation is, right?

So right now I am in the process of planning for Thanksgiving. I'm in the process of planning for Christmas. Way ahead of time, right? It's August. I'm planning for all of those things, so when I arrive there, it will be done. My plans will be done, they will be easily executed, I won't have anything at the last minute, we already know who's coming, we already know what we're doing. We're already going to the Cowboys game.

All of the things are planned ahead of time, and a lot of people will say to me, "Wow, that's pretty far ahead to be thinking about Christmas." And I agree. I think way far ahead. I've already planned my entire business schedule. We've already planned our team meeting in January, everything is already organized way ahead of time.

Now, the reason I'm able to do that is because right now I'm not putting out fires. I'm not responding to my current moment because I already planned this moment before. I prepared for it. So I'm arriving in this moment having

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taken care of myself already. Right? I have food in the house, I know what's for lunch, I know what I'm going to be working on today, my calendar is already planned.

So I'm not having to spend a lot of mental energy in my present moment reacting to situations and forgetting about things. It's all preplanned. The thing that happens with pre-planning and being proactive for proactivation is that you make such better decisions for yourself ahead of time in terms of creating the long-term results that you want.

When I'm thinking about my business, like for example, I'm thinking about my business 14 months from now when I will actually have a building. So everything that I'm thinking about and planning for is with knowing that I will have created a place for us to do coaching. So I'm planning the trainings, I'm planning the workshops, I'm planning the food. We're going to have a kitchen in there, I'm talking to a chef about working in there.

So all of the stuff I'm talking about is 14 months from now. So when I get to that 14-month place, I will get to enjoy the present moment so much more. A lot of people think that being in the present moment means that you don't think about the future. I think the opposite is true. I think the more that you plan for the future, the more present you're able to be in that moment having had planned for it.

So when you're thinking about your future, one of the things that you want to remember to focus on and take care ahead of time are all of those obstacles. If you have taken courses from me, if you are in Scholars, you know that the way that I plan things ahead of time is I create a goal or I create a plan and then I write down everything that needs to happen to have that plan executed, and then I need to anticipate all of the obstacles ahead of time.

So when I think, "What could happen that would prevent me from doing this?" Like for example, with my building that I'm building, what could happen that would prevent us from being able to build it? Well, we could run out of money. That would be no good. The permits maybe wouldn't go

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through. You know, we would never have met the deadlines, all of those things.

So we sit down and we kind of anticipate what are the issues that are going to happen, what are the decision that we're going to have to make, and we start planning for those ahead of time. And I'm always asking questions of everyone, like "What could go wrong here, how can we prevent that from happening?"

Such an amazing question that gets everybody on the same page thinking about what could be those obstacles, and then when they arrive, you already have the solution, it's already planned for. It's just such a more peaceful way to live.

So remember, the reason why people procrastinate is not because of laziness, it's not because of any ineptness, it's not because of any like moral issue or lack of discipline, anything like that. It is simply because you have a human brain that seeks pleasure, avoids pain, and wants to be efficient. Procrastination is an easy way to experience pleasure, not have to go to work, not have to experience any kind of discomfort and to be efficient at what you're already doing.

People will say, "I do better under pressure, I do better the last minute." Now, it's not that you do better. I mean, really think about this. It's not that you actually do better last minute, it's that you actually do something when it comes down to the last minute. People will say, "When I'm under pressure I do better." I'll say, "What do you mean by that?" They're like, "Well then I really get it done." And I'm like, "So it's not that you do better, you just do it."

So don't tell yourself that lie. And if you do better under pressure, just move your deadline up so you do the work ahead of time without needing the actual external pressure. You can provide that internal pressure.

Something I've been thinking a lot about lately, and I talked about it on the last podcast, is that the better we are at applying gentle pressure to

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ourselves and gentle expectations to ourselves that we want to exceed and seek our own approval at, the more we're going to be able to accomplish. So being able to want to get your own approval and to be kind of internally able to give that to yourself is how you can utilize your brain's natural tendency to seek approval in order to get stuff done.

When you procrastinate, you create pressure that prevents the delay. So as you get closer to a deadline, your thought that drives that action changes. But this only works when there is pressure to get it done and when there is a deadline that is external, and this is what I see happen to so many of my students. Is when there is no external pressure to get something done, they don't get anything done.

So I have students that were amazing employees, I have students that when the expectation is of them as a student to meet certain deadlines, they do it beautifully. But as soon as they're implementing their own deadlines and they're applying their own pressure, they don't follow through at all with their own expectations of themselves.

So then how can we create what is good about procrastination; getting a lot done in a short amount of time, and still have time on the backend to be sure it's on time and completed to our standards? That is the question that we have to have. What works with it and what doesn't?

If you like to procrastinate, all I'm doing is suggesting that you do it sooner by giving you a deadline up front, and making sure that you honor your own deadlines. It's the difference between creating your life and reacting to your life. Many of us do well, like I said, in a job with external pressure. But once we're on our own we have to learn the skill of being proactive on purpose.

So the best way that I know how to do this - I mean, wouldn't you love it if - think about everything you've ever wanted to do. And think about if you actually did everything that you said you wanted to do. How would your life be different? I was talking to one of my colleagues recently and she was saying to me, "The thing about you Brooke, is you say you're going to do big, crazy things, and then you do them."

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And it's an amazing feeling to set big goals and to accomplish them; to set little goals and accomplish them. To say you're going to do something and then to honor your word to yourself only because you said you would. You establish a relationship with yourself where you have so much confidence in yourself and so much trust in yourself. You know you're not going to set unrealistic goals because you're the one that has to deliver on them, and you know that you're not going to let yourself down by not following through on those goals.

So we have to use our prefrontal cortex to make plans and execute them no matter what. We can't rely on fear and pressure to drive us. So here are the steps. Make a plan to produce results. Make sure it's a very specific plan. Follow the formula that I teach you. Schedule it on the calendar in chunks.

So here's how I want you guys to think about it, and this is a huge distinction that a lot of people don't teach. And so I want you to understand it. I want you to think about when you have a paper due or you have a project due and it's Friday, and that project's due at five o'clock. I want you to think about how much work you get done in a short amount of time in order to produce that project.

What's beautiful about that is you get a lot of work done in a short amount of time. We want to double down on that. We want you to be able to get a lot of work done in a short amount of time, but not because you're doing it last minute and not because you're procrastinating, but because you're being proactive and you're giving yourself a shorter amount of time to do it.

You need to follow the plan like you mean it. When you look at your calendar and there's something on it, you do not cancel it. You follow through and you do the work, and everything is due on time. You honor your own deadlines. And then you get to enjoy always being done ahead of time, knowing that your work is done, that you can now enjoy the present moment and start planning for a future moment where you will again take care of yourself so you can enjoy that present moment so much more.

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I want to say that proactivation, this process of reversing procrastination is what will make the difference in your life looking the way you want it to. When you decide, which is very challenging right, as adults, we have to make lots of decisions - when you decide what you want and then you make a plan to achieve it and then you follow that plan exactly, you genuinely create a life that you want.

It really is as simple as that. Now, you have to rely on your prefrontal cortex. You cannot rely on decisions in the moment. The prefrontal cortex is the planning part of your brain. It is the adult, human part of your brain. It works well when it's planning the future, and when it's executing the plan. It's the part of your brain that lets you know that even though you don't like it in this moment, you're going to love it long-term and that is the secret, right?

The more planning you do long-term, the more you get to enjoy that present moment, and actually, you get to enjoy pleasure in a genuine way instead of in an escaping way. So remember, here are the four steps. You make a plan to produce results. Not a plan to spend time on something. No. You make a plan to produce results. You schedule it on the calendar in chunks. You follow the plan like you mean it. Everything is due ahead of time, and you enjoy always being done ahead of time so you can really enjoy that present moment.

That is proactivation my friends. Study it, learn it, apply it to your life and watch everything change. I'll talk to you next week.

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