

LIFE-COACHING FOR ADULTS WITH ADHD

FOCUSED

WITH KRISTEN CARDER



TROUBLESHOOTING YOUR PRODUCTIVITY:
HOW TO STOP PROCRASTINATING

with kristen carder

Troubleshooting your Productivity

How to Stop Procrastinating

By Kristen Carder

Life Coach & Creator of FOCUSED

Every adult with ADHD wants to stop procrastinating. I've not met one ADHDer that's told me that they don't have trouble with this.

The irony of this topic of is that I have procrastinated writing this workbook **HARDCORE**. You would be amazed at how I've avoided it. Not just avoided writing it, but avoided even **DECIDING** what topic to write about.

I've let my brain spin out in confusion for weeks. I've dreaded it. I've believed I wasn't capable. I thought I had nothing to offer. I felt insecure. I told myself I didn't want to do it (super helpful thought, LOL). I scheduled it on my calendar and then found other things to do because I kept thinking it would be too hard and I didn't know where to start.

And yet here we are. I'm writing it. It will be done on time to send to the printer on the 14th. How? Because I've taken myself through each of the following 5 steps that I'm going to teach you:

1. I took care of my basic needs
2. I identified and allowed my emotions
3. I constrained
4. I decided
5. I coached myself on my belief *in myself*

This was such a powerful exercise for me that I knew this was the perfect topic: Troubleshooting Your Productivity - How to Stop Procrastinating. Because listen, your girl is VERY productive, but every once in a while, I can procrastinate like the best of them.

When I do notice I'm procrastinating, it's not a problem. I watch it happen and I take care of myself. I know exactly what to do to get out of it and I know it won't last long. Imagine being so powerful. I can teach you.

I'm going to take you through each of these 5 steps individually and we'll talk about them in detail.

At the back you will find magical worksheets that will allow you to coach yourself and stop procrastinating. You can use them on the daily or whenever you notice yourself procrastinating.

NOTE: Unlike any other Focused worksheet, the procrastination worksheets are 4 pages long.

The STEAR Maps included in those worksheets is your ticket out of procrastination.

(Developed by Dr. Sasha Heinz. Used with permission.)

You get to keep this workbook for the rest of your life and use these skills for years to come. You can use it for small things like "Why am I procrastinating doing the dishes?" Or medium things like "Why am I procrastinating writing the workbook?" Or big things like "Why am I procrastinating starting that business?"

I cannot wait for you to experience transformation!

You're Doing It Right

A quick note for the ADHDer: Friend, do not (I REPEAT, DO NOT) ever feel “behind” on this work. There is no “behind”. There is only continuing to move forward.

You don't ever have to be consistent or “catch up” ...you can simply pick it up whenever you want to. It's no problem. It's only a problem if YOU decide it's a problem. I'm telling you it's not a problem.

YOU ARE GOING TO BE INCONSISTENT. Of course you are 😊 You have ADHD. It's not a problem at all.

Just don't quit, ok?

When you have time and space and energy, pick this book up and do as much of it as you want to.

Do a couple of days at a time if you want to and if it makes sense to. Do it once a week if you want to. Even if you only sit down once, it's still worth it.

Let's be real: Who else is asking you the hard questions? Where else are you being challenged to think on purpose?

Always remember: Missing a day or a week or a month of the workbook or the coaching videos is NEVER to be used as evidence for you being a failure. You are not a failure. You're learning. You don't have to be consistent. In fact, you won't be consistent.

Are you willing to do this program INCONSISTENTLY?

Spoiler Alert: it's the only way to do it 😊 You don't need to be consistent; you just need to be PERSISTENT. Be willing to start again 100 times.

OK, nowwwwww you're ready to start!

Do you procrastinate? If so, when was the last time? What was it like?

Do you want to stop procrastinating? Why or why not?

Overcoming procrastination will require some serious effort on your part. What are your thoughts on this? Are you prepared to do the work?

What would be possible for you if procrastination wasn't an issue?

How to Stop Procrastinating Step 1

Make Sure Your Basic Needs Are Met

Have you eaten today?

Have you had any water to drink?

Have you taken your medication(s)?

Have you had coffee?

Have you slept this week?

Have you moved your body at all?

If you're not meeting your basic needs, it will be very difficult to accomplish anything out of the ordinary. This is not to say that you can't be productive if you haven't slept or taken your meds, but it will likely be MUCH HARDER for you.

The first step to overcoming procrastination is to make sure that your basic needs are met.

If you listen to my podcast, you've probably heard me talk about my "morning routine" – I use that term very loosely because it's literally just a "please don't die" list. For me, that includes:

- Eat
- Take medication
- Drink coffee
- Fill up a big glass of water
- Plan my next meal

It's simple, but it matters. Because when I don't do it, I'm unproductive.

What's on your "basic needs" list?

What's your plan to remember to meet your basic needs?

How to Stop Procrastinating Step 2

Identify and Allow Negative Emotion

If you're procrastinating, it's because of an emotion.

Read it again. It's the truth.

All of our action (or our inaction) is caused by an emotion.

Remember: Thought → Emotion → Action → Result

Procrastination goes in the Action line of the STEAR Map.

Situation: Completed workbook due to printer by September 14

Thought

Emotion

Actions: *Procrastinating

***Avoiding**

Result

For much more on the STEAR Map, check out the How to Coach Yourself workbook.

It's well known in human psychology that we always take action from our emotions.

Emotions fuel our actions. Always.

What are your thoughts about this? Do you believe it? Do you see it in your own life?
How do you usually feel when you procrastinate? Explain:

We procrastinate because we dread doing something hard, or we're afraid we're going to fail, or we're confused and we don't know what to do, or we are bored. We avoid because we feel shame.

But I have one of the world's best-kept secrets for you: Humans are actually supposed to feel negative emotion. Life isn't about feeling good all the time. That's not the goal.

Crazy, right?!

Imagine feeling happy or excited about the things you're procrastinating:

- An awkward conversation
- Cleaning out a junk-filled closet
- Preparing your taxes
- Quitting your "stable" job to start a "risky" business
- Writing that 100-page thesis

It honestly wouldn't make sense to feel fantastic about these things, would it? What are your thoughts?

Have you found yourself believing the lie that you *should* feel good all the time? Explain:

The goal is not to feel good all the time. The goal is to be human, and humans experience a wide variety of emotions including boredom, dread, anxiety, fear, shame, etc.

Since these emotions are a natural part of life, learning how to recognize and feel them is the **ONLY** way you will learn to have authority over procrastination. Because if you're not willing to feel, you will **AVOID**.

Think about your goal. When you're procrastinating, what emotions are you usually avoiding? If you don't know for sure, what's your best guess?

In order to stop procrastinating, what emotions do you imagine you'll need to begin to allow?

When I realized that I was procrastinating writing this workbook, I checked in with myself on how I was feeling. My primary emotions were self-doubt, fear, and dread.

Since I know that thoughts create emotions, I started to write down my thoughts in my journal. Here's my simple thought download:

I don't have time to write this workbook. I am totally blocked. I have nothing to offer. I'm confused. I don't feel powerful. I don't think I can handle this. I don't want to write this stupid workbook.

No wonder I was procrastinating. My unexamined thoughts were creating terrible emotions, and in an effort to avoid those emotions, I was avoiding my work.

Procrastinating is usually a resistance to emotion. I want to encourage you to open up to and ALLOW your negative emotion. Here's what I did:

I allowed myself to feel afraid. Writing a workbook for hundreds of people to use deserves a little fear, don't you think?

I allowed myself to feel dread. Sitting down to get into deep work & focus for hours at a time takes so much effort. I can dread that. No problem.

I allowed myself to feel self-doubt. Self-doubt is normal and understandable. Nothing has gone wrong.

And then I began to generate my two favorite emotions:

ACCEPTANCE and WILLINGNESS. I believe these two emotions are everything when it comes to overcoming procrastination.

Here's what I wrote:

I accept that this is hard. I accept that I'll have to say no to other things. I am willing to write it because I love my Focused community. I am willing to endure the difficulty because without it, my people won't have a workbook next month. I accept that self-doubt is a part of growing quickly. I am willing to be uncomfortable in order to grow. I will open up to the discomfort.

What are your thoughts?

How to Stop Procrastinating Step 3

Constrain. Constrain. Constrain. Constrain.

Those of you who've been in Focused for any amount of time know that this is my favorite thing to talk about. We apply it to every topic that we study month after month.

When we constrain, we intentionally put limits or restrictions on ourselves. As ADHDers, we must do this deliberately.

Why? Because our brains naturally want to bounce around from idea to idea, more so than any neurotypical's brain.

ADHD is not a deficit of attention, it's a deficit in our ability to CONstrain our attention and focus on one thing long enough to get it done. Therefore, we must intentionally learn this skill.

When we are procrastinating, it's often because we have a lot of things swimming around our minds and we don't know how to make sense of them all. We're overwhelmed with the jumble. Everything feels important and we don't know how to constrain our focus to one thing at a time.

When you notice that you're procrastinating, it's crucial that you ask yourself what's on your mind and you get very clear:

- What's taking up your brain space?
- Do you know exactly what you want to accomplish and by when?
- Is it broken into small, doable chunks or do you need to break it down even further?

- Are you believing the lie that everything is important?
- Where should you start?
- Is your next step super clear?

Focusing on too many things at once will leave you overwhelmed and spinning out. This looks like knowing that you have a lot to do, but not accomplishing any of it.

How has this been true for you?

What do you do when you've got a lot on your plate?

Do you try to focus on too many things at one time?

In what ways could you benefit from applying the principle of constraint to your life?

What are your thoughts about constraint?

How do you feel when I bring up this topic?

Are you willing to change your mind about constraint?

What thoughts would you need to practice to open up the possibility of constraint being a **STRENGTH** for you as you do this work?

How to Stop Procrastinating Step 4

Make Decisions (Quickly)

We're going to sit here for a hot minute because this is an issue that I have seen come up with all of my ADHD clients and I really want to spend some quality time addressing it.

Many ADHDers struggle to make decisions. This leads us to stay in confusion for way longer than we need to.

When we're confused, we don't take action. When we don't take action, we procrastinate. When we procrastinate, we're not productive.

So, a huge part of overcoming procrastination is developing the ability to make decisions. Quickly. Do you struggle to make decisions?

What is something that you're putting off deciding?

Why haven't you decided?

How long have you been "thinking" and "deciding"?

A huge reason that we avoid decisions is because we believe there's a right decision and a wrong decision, and we are scared to make the wrong decision. Do you notice this in your life? How?

I grew up in a conservative Christian home and was always taught about right and wrong and absolute truth. I'm super thankful for my upbringing, but I now see how I've misapplied the concepts.

I've allowed "right and wrong" to paralyze my decision making. I certainly don't want to make the wrong decision, and I'm not sure which one is the right decision, so I'm just going to put off making any decision at all.

Now when I find myself procrastinating, I can often trace it back to putting off a decision because I am telling myself “I don’t know what the right decision is.”

For the most part, I’ve stopped this nonsense. I still believe there’s objective right and wrong, just not about most things. 99% of our decisions are not MORAL decisions.

Usually, we’re not deciding whether or not to kill someone. We’re not deciding whether or not to rob a bank. We’re not deciding whether or not to cheat on our spouse.

Most of the time, there’s absolutely no right or wrong with the decisions we’re making.

Think about most of the decisions you make in your life:

- What to eat
- With whom to spend our time
- What to watch on TV
- What to read
- Where to work
- Whether or not to start a business
- Whether or not to quit our job
- Who to date or who to marry
- Whether or not to have kids (and how many)
- What to spend our money on
- To request coaching on a call or not
- To respond to a text message or not
- To keep an item of clothing or something sentimental from our childhood
- Where to start when we want to clean our home
- Whether or not to go out on Friday night
- How many clients to work with
- To take that graduate course or not
- To apply for that job or not
- What to buy at Target
- What to post on social media
- To hire a coach or not

NONE of these are a moral issue. There's literally no right or wrong with any of them.

Have you been viewing your decisions as right or wrong? Explain:

How has the concept of "right" and "wrong" held you back from making decisions?

What would your life be like if you eliminated "right and wrong" from your decision-making process? What would change for you?

I'm going to say something profound and so I really want you to focus up:

Most of the time when we ask ourself "Is this the right decision or the wrong decision?"
what we REALLY mean is "Will this make me happy or not?"

That's what we want to know: Will I be HAPPY with this decision? Will I enjoy this? Will it work out? Will this feel good? Will this make my life better or worse? Easier or harder? Will I be successful at it?

THAT is what most of us mean by "right decision" or "wrong decision."

How is this true for you?

Here's what I want to offer to you: We don't get to know if it will work out in advance. Ever. With anything.

You don't get to know if that job is the right job before you start the job. You have to show up to work and experience it to find out. You didn't know if Focused would be right for you before you joined. You had to make the decision to join NOT KNOWING.

You don't get to know if you'll be successful in business before you start. You don't get to know if investing in those specific stocks is going to work out for you or not. You don't get to know if you'll have healthy kids or if your marriage will work out.

None of us get to know any of that sh*t in advance, and yet we stay in indecision for so long trying to figure out something that's not figureoutable.

Will this make me happy? I'm not sure. It's unclear. Let me think about it some more.

Where in your life do you stay in indecision because you're trying to figure out if something will make you happy (or work out) before you've tried it?

Now we're going to get deep here. There are 2 crucial things you must know in order to be comfortable with making decisions:

1. In order to stop agonizing over decisions and which one will make you happy, you're going to need to stop thinking that your situations make you happy (or not happy).

This goes back to the STEAR Map. Situations are neutral. They don't cause emotions. It's your thoughts that create your emotions.

If you know that your thoughts create the emotion of happiness or fulfillment or success, then you can be happy, fulfilled, and feel successful in any job, in any relationship, at any school, in any car, in any home.

Do some situations just naturally make it easier to be happy, fulfilled, and feel successful? Sure, of course!

But as you begin to take ownership of your own happiness and stop delegating it to something outside of yourself, you'll understand that decisions aren't that big of a deal because YOU bring the happiness. You bring the fulfillment. You bring the pride.

You create these emotions with your thoughts.

You create these emotions with your thoughts.

You create these emotions with your thoughts.

You create these emotions with your thoughts.

Are you delegating your happiness to something outside of yourself? Explain:

Do you believe that you can feel happy in any job? Explain:

Do you believe that you can feel fulfilled in any relationship? Explain:

Do you believe that you can feel content in any home or with any car? Explain what you would need to think:

Do you believe that you can feel successful or secure no matter how much money is in your bank account? Explain what you would need to think:

2. In order to stop agonizing over decisions, you need to really like your reasons for the decision you make.

Analyze WHY you are making this specific decision, and make sure you LOVE your reasons for your choice. **When you love your reasons, you can have your own back no matter what the outcome is.**

Example: Greg and I are about to start a bathroom renovation in our fixer upper. There are SO MANY decisions to be made and, for goodness sakes, I have no clue which shower insert is the right one. How should I know?

In my former life, I would have procrastinated, put this off, and not made any decisions in advance because they felt too hard. I would have waited until the last minute and then made a rash decision in the moment at the time when I was FINALLY FORCED TO DECIDE. It would have sounded like *"I don't care, just get that one – sure that's fine. Whatever. That works."*

But now, as this new version of me, I am not afraid to make decisions around this renovation (of which I know nothing about, let's be real).

I chose and ordered a shower kit this weekend. We made one trip to Lowe's, one trip to Home Depot, and researched for about an hour online. And then I chose.

I made sure that I liked my reasons for choosing the one that I did:

- It's the right size and price
- It's cute
- It has two glass walls (space savers)
- It has good reviews
- It's in stock

Is it the “right” shower kit? I don’t freaking know. We’ll find out when it’s fully installed. Are there other, BETTER shower kits out there? Maybe. Probably. But I intentionally kept myself out of a research spiral.

So, what if the shower I chose doesn’t end up working out for us?

I’ll be sad, but I won’t beat myself up. I won’t tell myself I should have spent more time on it. I liked my reasons for choosing it and I’m confident in my decision and we won’t know if it’s perfect until it’s in and fully installed – I don’t get to know that ahead of time.

See? Decisions aren’t that big of a deal. We don’t need to avoid them or put them off. Most of them are not moral, and NONE of them make us happy or unhappy. Remember – thoughts create emotions. Shower inserts do not create emotions.

So, just decide. Become a decision-making machine. This is where you’ll find so much power. You’ll begin to take incredible action in your life.

If you’ve gone through these last few pages and you’re experiencing a shift in your thinking, good. There’s one more sneaky thing that I want you to look out for.

Sometimes we indulge in confusion as a protective mechanism. We stay in indecision so that we don’t have to decide and take the scary action.

Without consciously realizing it, we stay in analysis paralysis so that we don’t have to risk failing. We tell ourselves “I don’t know” so that we *don’t have to know*, because if we know then we have to make a move and that’s freaking hard! That comes with vulnerability and the potential of failure.

How has this been true for you?

What emotions do you have to be willing to feel in order to make a decision and take action?

How to Stop Procrastinating Step 5

Build Your Belief in Yourself

You've taken care of your basic needs

You've worked through your negative emotion

You've constrained and gotten very clear on your goal

You've made decisions

Now it's time to coach yourself on your belief in yourself. Regarding your goal, if you don't think you can do it, you'll never do it.

Think about your goal. What are your thoughts about yourself in relation to this goal?

It's important to observe what you're thinking about yourself and whether or not these thoughts are serving you. When I wrote down the thought "I don't have anything to offer", it didn't serve me and it wasn't true!

Write down why you CAN do it:

Write down why you ARE capable:

What skills do you bring to the table that will allow you to accomplish this goal?

Your thoughts about you matter.

For more on this work, visit the Identity and Self Concept course in the Bonus section of the Focused site.

How to Stop Procrastinating

Why am I procrastinating? GET CLEAR. Is it because of a basic need? Negative emotion? Inability to constrain? Indecision? Or lack of belief in self? I am procrastinating because

...

I have met my basic needs: Food ✓ Water ✓ Meds ✓ Caffeine ✓ _____ ✓

...

I know that procrastination is an action caused by an emotion.

I am feeling _____

Emotions are one-word answers. Options include fear, dread, anxiety, boredom, annoyance, shame, rejection, entitlement, powerlessness...

Open up to how you feel. Try to sit with the emotion(s) for 10 long, slow breaths.

I'm feeling the above emotion(s) because I'm thinking:

Reading over my thought download...Are the thoughts true?

Would Kristen Carder agree that they are true? _____

Are these thoughts serving me? Are they helping me to reach my goal?

Acceptance and willingness are 2 very powerful emotions when it comes to our goals. What would I need to think in order to feel acceptance?

What would I need to think in order to feel willing?

...

Often when I procrastinate, it's because I'm trying to do too many things at one time. When my brain doesn't know exactly what to do next, it will spin out in confusion and drama. What am I telling myself I have to do?

What 1 thing do I choose to give my attention to right now?

What do I need to let go of in order to focus on that 1 thing?

My brain is most powerful when it knows exactly what to do. Can I break down this process into smaller pieces to make it simpler for myself?

....

Sometimes when I procrastinate it's because I am struggling to make a decision.

This sounds like *I'm confused* or *I don't know* or *I need to think about this some more*.

Is this me right now? _____

Why? _____

Am I making this a "right or wrong" decision? _____

Is this *actually* a moral decision? _____

Am I delegating my emotional wellbeing to the outcome of this decision? *This sounds like "If I pick the right one I'll feel good; if I pick the wrong one I'll feel bad"*

What creates my emotions? _____

If I want to feel good no matter what the outcome, what would I need to think?

...

Do I believe that I have what it takes to accomplish this goal? _____

What are 3 things that make me capable of getting it done?

Why am I the best person to do this?

How would the future, more evolved, version of me handle this?

How am I going to move forward right now?

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I have met my basic needs: Food ✓ Water ✓ Meds ✓ Caffeine ✓ _____ ✓

...

I know that procrastination is an action caused by an emotion.

I am feeling _____

Emotions are one-word answers. Options include fear, dread, anxiety, boredom, annoyance, shame, rejection, entitlement, powerlessness...

Open up to how you feel. Try to sit with the emotion(s) for 10 long, slow breaths.

I'm feeling the above emotion(s) because I'm thinking:

Reading over my thought download...Are the thoughts true?

Would Kristen Carder agree that they are true? _____

Are these thoughts serving me? Are they helping me to reach my goal?

Acceptance and willingness are 2 very powerful emotions when it comes to our goals. What would I need to think in order to feel acceptance?

What would I need to think in order to feel willing?

...

Often when I procrastinate, it's because I'm trying to do too many things at one time. When my brain doesn't know exactly what to do next, it will spin out in confusion and drama. What am I telling myself I have to do?

What 1 thing do I choose to give my attention to right now?

What do I need to let go of in order to focus on that 1 thing?

My brain is most powerful when it knows exactly what to do. Can I break down this process into smaller pieces to make it simpler for myself?

....

Sometimes when I procrastinate it's because I am struggling to make a decision.

This sounds like *I'm confused* or *I don't know* or *I need to think about this some more*.

Is this me right now? _____

Why? _____

Am I making this a "right or wrong" decision? _____

Is this *actually* a moral decision? _____

Am I delegating my emotional wellbeing to the outcome of this decision? *This sounds like "If I pick the right one I'll feel good; if I pick the wrong one I'll feel bad"*

What creates my emotions? _____

If I want to feel good no matter what the outcome, what would I need to think?

...

Do I believe that I have what it takes to accomplish this goal? _____

What are 3 things that make me capable of getting it done?

Why am I the best person to do this?

How would the future, more evolved, version of me handle this?

How am I going to move forward right now?

How to Stop Procrastinating

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Notes