

# How to Stop Procrastination & Increase Motivation | Dr. Andrew Huberman

So how can we overcome procrastination Well it turns out that there are findings from within the addiction literature that turn out to be very powerful towards leveraging our way out of procrastination And it has to do with this You already know because I've told you probably a dozen times now that the depth of the trough after a dopamine peak is proportional to how high that peak was and how steep it was how quickly that peak occurred It turns out that not only is the depth of the trough proportional to that but the rate at which you get out of that trough is proportional to how steep that trough is Let me explain this for you in as clear terms as I possibly can imagine you're in an a motivated state you're just not feeling motivated you're procrastinating You may think OK the thing to do here is something I'll clean the house I'll take care of some bills I'll do something or I'll just wait those approaches as we talked about before generally don't work or at least don't work quickly or they lead you right up to the deadline And that's the deadline that forces you to get something done or you just don't get it done and you don't succeed in your goal That happens a lot as well However if you were to take that state of being unmotivated or procrastinating and actually do something that's harder than being in that a motivated state In other words doing something that's more effortful even painful you can rebound yourself out of that dopamine trough much more quickly So what do I mean you wanna put yourself in a state that's worse than or harder than the state that you're in or do something quote unquote more painful And here I want to be very clear I'll say this three times but I'm gonna say it for the first time Now when I say more painful I do not mean doing any kind of tissue damaging or psychologically damaging behavior or anything of that sort that's going to render you injured or not Well even in the short term that's not what I'm referring to Ok let's just get that one out of the way What I'm referring to is the fact that for instance if you're feeling a motivated but you find yourself cleaning the house as a way to procrastinate You could say well cleaning the house is harder than sitting down and doing nothing But actually in that moment or in those moments that's not the case or else you wouldn't be doing it The reality is that the dopamine system works according to what feels hard or easy in the moment In other words if you're feeling a motivated you need to do something and put yourself into a state that's harder than the

state you're in So for instance if you're sitting around feeling unmotivated or you find yourself tending to tasks that are irrelevant to the goal that you really should be focused on You need to put your body and mind into a state of discomfort quickly And the way to do that is to either engage in some tangential activity meaning an activity not related to your goal that puts your body into a very different state So here again I'll default to the obvious one which is something like cold shower or cold immersion which not only increases dopamine long term or over several hours rather but for most people is experienced as pain that pain causes a rebound out of that dopamine trough faster than it would occur If you had just stayed in that a motivated state and waited for it to go away or done something like cleaning up that for whatever reason felt like it required less friction When I say friction I mean limbic friction your limbic system is always in this dialogue with your forebrain and limbic friction goes two ways Limbic friction can be you're tired and you don't want to do something And so you have to quote unquote motivate to do it energize yourself to do it or limbic friction can be that you're nervous and scared and anxious to do something and you have to calm yourself in order to lean forward into action in order to do that thing Despite the anxiety I realize this can be a little bit confusing as a concept So I want to go into a bit more detail Let's imagine that you or somebody else does not like to exercise You don't want to exercise and you're trying to get your minimum of five days per week exercise and you're just not motivated to do it There are a couple of different techniques to doing this Assuming you've taken care of all the baseline stuff all the foundational stuff we talked about earlier and you're just not getting in gear and you find yourself you know checking your phone or maybe you're tending to some tasks Obviously those things are quote unquote easier for you meaning they cause less limbic friction than engaging in exercise The typical advice would be just exercise for one minute ok Just get one minute of exercise or five minutes and then use the successful completion of that one or five minutes as a milestone that allows you to then move to the next milestone And indeed that approach can work And it's exactly what I'm describing here when I say that you're in a state of lack of motivation or procrastination or both And you need to put yourself into a more painful not less painful state So what do you do You push up against that friction and you exercise for a short while and then that pops you out of that trough That's possible But for a lot of people even that won't be possible because they just can't get motivated or they do that one minute or five minutes and they're just like ok I'm still in the trough I'm not

actually feeling that great in those circumstances It makes sense to do something that's tangential to the whole path that you're trying to pursue This goal that you're trying to pursue that is believe it or not much worse than just being a motivated And when I say worse I don't mean picking some task that normally you don't like to do but now you're willing to do I mean literally thinking about what would be worse than being in this state again without causing yourself tissue or psychological damage What would be worse Well cold water would be worse for many people Very cold water So the key is to figure out something that for lack of a better way to put it really sucks really sucks and yet is safe And by doing that you step in the trough you see in the slope of the trough which we know brings you back to your baseline level of dopamine more quickly Now for some people that will be deliberate cold exposure through cold shower ice bath And I have to tell you that if you're cringing as I say this well then there you go You now have a tool that you know you cringe even when you just think about and therefore represents a great tool for you So if I'm procrastinating to do something I really need to do Should I just simply wait for that procrastination to evaporate No will it eventually evaporate Maybe will a deadline eventually surface that will trigger me into an anxious or activated state that will allow me to complete what needs to be done Maybe hopefully but better would be to get out of that a motivated state that state of procrastination quickly