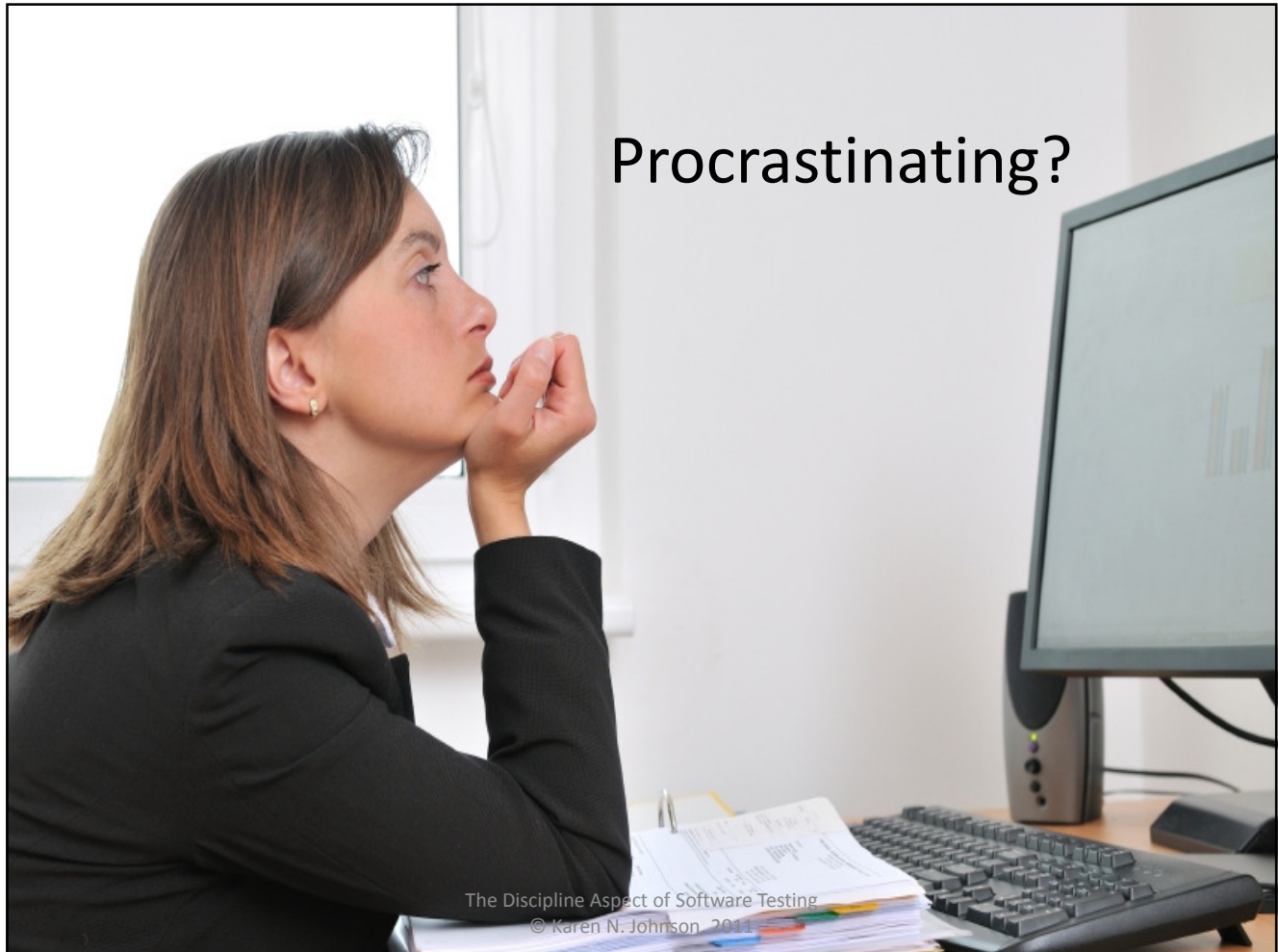


The Discipline Aspect of Software Testing

Karen N. Johnson



Procrastinating? Possible reasons

- I don't understand what I am supposed to do.
- I don't want to do what I'm supposed to do.
- I resent having to do the task.
- I don't know where to begin.
- I'm afraid.
- I want the work to be perfect and with that criteria in mind, I can't start or I can't finish the task.
- I have other tasks I'd prefer to do.
- I don't want to work at all (right now).

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Procrastination?

Solve the internal issue

- Ask yourself if you need external or internal help.
- Is there a background reason you do not want to get the task done?
- Ask yourself if there is an obstacle to be resolved.
- Do you need to information, permission, direction, etc. from someone else?
- Do you need to apply self-discipline to resolve your roadblock on your own?
- Have you made the task “too big” to accomplish?
- Remember - Doing nothing solves nothing.

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Procrastinating? Try a practical maneuver

- Give yourself a small reward for each task completed.
- Use an alarm clock and limit the time for the task.
- Reduce the task size.
- Look for simple tasks that can draw you back to the work.
- Realize a single task accomplished is better than no tasks touched.

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From Procrastination to Disciplined

- Admit your work is late.
- Apply “grit” and self-control to get the job done.
- Recognize there will be no relief until the task is accomplished.
- Make the tasks small. Reward yourself through the process and not just at completion.
- Take on smaller and simpler tasks until you get your momentum back. Or understand what part of a task is blocking you from progresses or starting.

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“Self control is
more
indispensable
than
gunpowder.”

~ Henry Morton Stanley

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"We can't get good at something solely by reading about it. And we'll never make giant leaps in any endeavor by treating it like a snack food that we munch on whenever we're getting bored. You get good at something by doing it repeatedly. And by listening to specific criticism from people who are already good at what you do. And by a dedication to getting better, even when it's inconvenient and may not involve a handy bulleted list."

~ Merlin Mann

The solution combination

- Self-control
- Self-mastery
- Deliberate practice
- Mental toughness
- Willpower
- Focus
- Compartmentalize
- Positive self-talk



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“Practice
doesn't make
perfect.
Perfect practice
makes perfect.”
~ Vince Lombardi

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Deliberate Practice

Consists of –

- Skill acquisition
- Skill assessment
- Perseverance
- Practice time
- Practice structure
- Discipline
- Invested in the outcome
- Motivated

11 Steps

- Slow down
- Start with a goal
- Chunking
- Practice at the edge of your ability
- Get feedback
- Repeat
- Vary your approach
- Count good repetitions
- Record the data and review
- Make it harder
- Find someone who is better

Source: <http://expertenough.com/2327/deliberate-practice-steps>

“Once you’re physically capable
of winning a gold medal, the rest
is 90 percent mental.”

~ *Patti Johnson*

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Mental Toughness

Consists of:

- Motivation
- Focus
- Composure
- Confidence
- Calmness
- Purpose

“Having an unshakeable belief in your ability to achieve competition goals.”

~ David Yukelson

“Mental toughness is not letting anyone break you.”

~ Jimi Mitchell

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Multitasking

“As our culture becomes more mobile, high-speed, techno-stressed, information-cluttered, and media-saturated, we are getting pushed out of our focus zones without realizing it. We accept as normal a chronic state of being either overactivated or exhausted. We wind up in a continuous state of partial attention in which our choices skip away from us and our quality of life suffers.”

- From “Find Your Focus Zone”



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Distracted?

Possible reasons

- I don't know where to begin.
- I don't understand what's a priority. Everything seems important
- I've been sitting for hours and I forgot to move. My head or my body (possibly my heart) can't sit anymore.
- I feel like I'm doing the same thing over and over. I need a different approach. My mind is shutting down forcing me to make a change.
- I need less of something such as meetings or phone calls.
- I need more of something such as food or drink.
- I have a compelling interference pulling my focus away. Note that the compelling interference may be positive or negative.

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Distracted?

Solve the internal issue

- Being distracted can be embarrassing. First you have to acknowledge the issue.
- Ask yourself if you need to step away, resolve the “other item” and *then* resume work.
- Alternately ask yourself if you need to mentally put aside the interference and *continue* with work.
- Do you need inspiration to unblock an obstacle?
- Doing nothing solves nothing.

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Distracted?

Try a practical maneuver

- The clean desk
- The pile approach
- Use time boxing
- Find an inspiration; find something compelling in the work you have
- Realize that a single task accomplished is better than no tasks touched.

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From Distracted to Focused

- Remember that being focused feels empowering
- Remember that satisfaction comes after you've been able to focus.
- Recognize that you have had good days as well as bad days. And that a good day will come again.
- Realize that there are days for "heavy lifting." These are the days when you feel you have focused and accomplished tasks.
- Loss of focus may come when you're burnt out so avoid burnout by balancing heavy days with lighter days. Stay ahead of the problem.

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Stressed?

The Distress Aspect of Software Testing
Dorothy M. Johnson, 2011

Stressed out? Possible issues

- I'm overworked and need a break.
- I don't understand what's a priority. Everything seems important
- There is a barrier to getting something done – possibly an unspoken barrier. Example, disagreement about a task.
- I have a personal issue crowding my thoughts.
- Office politics

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Stressed Out?

Solve the internal issue

- Ask yourself if you need external or internal help.
- Do you need to get permission, resolution, etc. from someone else?
- Do you need to self-soothe and resolve your roadblock on your own?
- Can you compartmentalize external disruptions?
- Are there politics that need to be addressed?
- Doing nothing solves nothing.

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Stressed Out?

Try a practical maneuver

- Three nice things today
- No decisions today
- Fix the problem; then work
- Ignore it; the art of compartmentalizing
- Is today the right day to tackle X?
- Give yourself permission to say “not today”
- Separate the issues from the tasks

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From Stressed Out to Inspired

- Figure out what the major and minor sources of stress.
- Determine what you can change and what you must accept.
- Find ways to relax. Physical movement helps.
- Remove yourself from a bad situation before it gets worse.
- Choose smaller less critical tasks until you are in a better place.
- Realize your perspective may be off base. Consider getting another opinion.

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Time Boxing

I use the term time boxing for a series of techniques I've developed.

The purpose is to discipline myself to getting through tasks.



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Time Box Tactic #1: Pretend the deadline is today

How it works

- Close your eyes or at least mentally block out all activities.
- Engage your imagination to envision that the software you are working on will be released for production use “today.”

Why it works

- Shifts your perception of time.
- Drives important tasks to the top.
- Creates a sense of urgency.
- Helps you realize what critical tasks you may have ignored, skipped or “just haven’t gotten around to.”

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Time Box Tactic #2: What if I don't finish X?

How it works

Ask yourself if you don't complete a specific task, a task you are struggling to complete, what would happen if you did not complete the task. Complete the task today, or possibly never complete the task.

Why it works

- Forces a short analysis of the importance of tasks.
- Indirectly highlights the importance of one task versus another task.

Time Box Tactic 3: Can I finish x by y time?

How it works

- Set a specified amount of time to finish a task.
- Use a kitchen timer or alarm clock.
- Stick to the clock/deadline.

Why it works

- Focused solely on one task, makes one task more doable.
- Focus on only one and temporarily ignoring other work helps direct energy.
- Limit the time for a task alleviates the pressure of the rest of the day and keeps one task from bloating and filling a day.

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Time Box Tactic #4: Client Audit

How it works

Imagine your client (or some other person of influence) can see what you have completed and what you have not finished.

Why it works

When you mentally “your client’s voice in your head, you know what issues/tasks a they will be most concerned about and you will feel the pressure and focus to tackle that one task.

Time Box Tactic #5: Task Switching

How it works

- Set sessions for work in one hour or one and a half hour increments.
- Allow yourself a 30 minute break in between each time block.
- Use an alarm clock or kitchen timer or an app like Pomodoro.

Why it works

- Forces you to realize the limits of time.
- Keeps your focus fresh.
- Forces you to rotate through assorted tasks.


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**Procrastination
is the thief of
time.**

- Edward Young



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**“Self-regulation
will always be a
challenge, but if
somebody’s going
to be in charge, it
might as well be
me.”**

*~ We Have Met the Enemy: Self-Control in an
Age of Excess by Daniel Akst*

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“We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a
habit.” ~ *Aristotle*



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Thank you for being here!

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