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How To Love Doing The Things You Hate

7 TIPS FOR MAKING EVERYTHING A LOT MORE ENJOYABLE

by Linda Formichelli

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Life coaches and career experts everywhere urge you to follow your bliss and do what you love. But that's easy. What about doing the things you hate, like writing thank-you notes, cleaning the oven, balancing your checkbook, going to the dentist, washing the car, or exercising? If you're like most people, you put off these dreaded tasks until they threaten to overwhelm you.

That mountain of must-dos that you didn't do can drain you of mental energy and create anxiety. Even minor stress such as this, when it's chronic, can lead to a host of conditions, from headaches to heart attack. So don't fret yourself sick--instead, follow these expert-tested tips for motivating yourself.

Chunk It Up

If you're faced with a task that makes you shudder with dismay, try breaking it up into smaller, more manageable pieces. "If I need to clean a room but find myself avoiding it, I set a timer for 15 minutes and do whatever I can in that time," says life coach Katey Coffing, PhD, of Carson City, Nevada. "When the buzzer goes off, I look around and see how much I've done. It's always an improvement, and that feels good. Plus, I often decide to finish the task because I've gotten over the hard part--starting it!"

Value Your Tasks

Think of the things you value in life--order, truth, responsibility, persistence, excellence, family, love, and kindness. Attach a value that's important to you to an unpleasant task you've been avoiding, suggests goal-setting and performance coach Caroline Adams Miller of Bethesda, Maryland. For example, going to the gym--even when you'd rather eat cookies and watch [Project Runway](#)--shows persistence and excellence. Doing those sales calls at work helps you support your family. Writing to Aunt Betty to thank her for the hand-knit sweater--even though it appears to have been designed for a dachshund--makes you feel virtuous and kind (and you are!).

Avoid the Torture

Zen Buddhist monk and teacher Thich Nhat Hanh once said, "To my mind, the idea that doing the dishes is unpleasant can occur only when you are not doing them." In other words, if you avoid doing something that's unpleasant but necessary, you'll torment yourself more by dreading the task than by actually rolling up your sleeves and doing it. You know how your mom used to tell you that anticipating your birthday or Christmas morning was half the fun? Well, it works both ways: Thinking about doing something you don't enjoy is half the torture, so get



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motivated to do the task right away by considering all the pain you'll avoid.

Eliminate the "Shoulds"

All those things you "should" do--do you really want or need to do them? Be ruthless in crossing tasks off your must-do list. "A lot of people say 'I really should do more entertaining,' and they hate doing it," says Linda Sapadin, PhD, a Connecticut-based psychologist, owner of www.psychwisdom.com, and author of [Now I Get It! Totally Sensational Advice for Living & Loving](#). "It may be best to say, 'I know I'm not good at entertaining, and I don't like it. I owe a friend an invite, so I'll take her out to dinner instead.'" For activities you find odious but that need to be on your list (like exercise), brainstorm ways around them. You may hate walking on the treadmill, but you may enjoy getting your cardio by shaking your booty to Shakira's Hips Don't Lie.

Eye on the Prize

Whenever you find yourself avoiding a task, ask yourself "What's in it for me?" suggests Kristin Taliaferro, a Master Certified life and career coach in Dallas. "Look at the outcome and what you'll gain if you do the thing you don't want to do," she says. "Keep your attention there. Surround yourself with reminders of the outcome to keep yourself focused and motivated." For example, if you need to have a tooth filled, think about how going to the dentist will help you maintain a bright smile and healthy teeth. Post photos of yourself or others with pearly white smiles on your computer or bathroom mirror to help take the edge off your dread.

Recruit Your Friends

Don't face the feared task alone if you don't have to. "Decluttering your house might be a drag, but it'll be fun if you ask a few friends to come over and help," suggests Taliaferro. "Play some music, mix up fruity drinks, and make it a social event. You'll get some work done, and you'll have fun." (Of course, you should then offer to do the same for your friends.)

Play Pretend

You may hate baking cookies for the PTA fundraiser or whipping up a week's worth of meals on Sunday, but you might love all that kitchen time if you were the star of your own cooking show. "I have a friend who hates making her kids' lunches, so she pretends she's on the Food Network and makes a big joke out of it," says Miller. If walking the dog is your bugaboo, pretend you're training to climb Mount Everest. If you dislike flossing your teeth, pretend you're getting ready for the Brightest Smile in America contest. "Inject humor and zest and fantasy into things that are drudges," Miller says. "People can imagine themselves doing the most amazing things."

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