

# **“Procrastination”: A Hardening of the Oughteries**

## **A Book Review by Terri Stephens, Real Order Professional Organizing**

Psychologists Jane Burka and Leonora Yuen’s book *“Procrastination”* is an insightful look into a problem that affects nearly everyone. It’s not uncommon for our clients to put off dealing with the obvious until their lives are out of control. The book examines the reasons *why* we put things off and includes many examples.

The second part of the book focuses on what can be done to manage procrastination. It begins with an inventory of six common areas in which procrastination may occur - household, work, school, personal care, social relationships and finances – and the excuses for not moving forward. The purpose of the exercise is to arrive at new thought patterns that help one get started rather than putting off until later. The book includes techniques on time management, setting goals and achieving them, and establishing a support system.

As an organizer, I found the section on working with procrastinators especially helpful. These techniques are recommended:

- Help them set small, interim goals
- Help them be concrete and realistic about what they need to do
- Reward progress made along the way
- Let them know that they are more to you than just their performance
- Establish clear limits, deadlines and consequences
- Consider yourself – let the procrastinator know how their inaction affects others

The authors advise that in all interactions with a procrastinator, try to function as a *consultant* and not a director, offering support, serving as a sounding board, and helping them to be realistic. We shouldn’t try to decide things for them or judge their moral character. The authors caution that we should *never* – except in rare cases – come to their rescue by doing the task ourselves. We only perpetuate the problem in becoming their “magic solution” so they continue to put things off, harboring the fantasy that someone else will come to their rescue at the last minute. As organizers, we play a vital role in teaching our clients how to do things for themselves *and* holding them accountable at the same time.



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