

# TOTAL BRAIN MAKEOVER

THE HANDBOOK FOR PROCRASTINATION PREVENTION

TAKE THE  
PROCRASTINATION TEST TO  
SEE WHAT NEEDS TO  
CHANGE IN YOUR BRAIN



LEARN WHY YOUR  
SCHEDULES ARE NOT  
SERVING YOU

SRINI PILLAY, M.D.

WORLD-RENOWNED



HARVARD-TRAINED  
PSYCHIATRIST AND  
BRAIN-IMAGING  
RESEARCHER

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The  
Procrastinator's  
Meeting  
Has Been  
Postponed.

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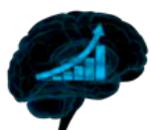
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Have you tried setting deadlines?  
 Making priority lists?  
 Decreasing interruptions?  
 Scheduling?

And you still can't catch up?

Then read through this guide on the psychology of procrastinators to see why your brain may not be functioning at its best – and discover how to change it



## TOTAL BRAIN MAKEOVER PROCRASTINATOR QUIZ

Answer True or False to each of the following statements:

1. Anxiety drives me to complete things
2. It is often difficult for me to decide next steps, causing me to delay taking action
3. Tasks are often so annoying that I simply cannot face doing them
4. I'd often rather be doing something else than what I am working on
5. I am not driven by a strong sense of purpose in my work
6. I love the last minute high just before I get something done
7. Things are often equally important, so prioritization is impossible
8. I can't get things done if the deadline is way ahead
9. My life and time management pull me in different directions at different times

### SCORE GUIDE

IF YOU ANSWERED **TRUE** TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTIONS, THIS INDICATES THAT YOU ARE LIKELY THE TYPE OF PROCRASTINATOR ILLUSTRATED BELOW:

1. AROUSAL
2. INDECISIVE
3. AVOIDANT
4. AVOIDANT
5. AVOIDANT
6. AROUSAL
7. INDECISIVE
8. AROUSAL
9. INDECISIVE

Add up the number of **TRUE** answers, and compare your total score in the three categories: **AROUSAL**, **INDECISIVE**, and **AVOIDANT**



## THE AROUSAL PROCRASTINATOR

### Who are you?

You are someone who gets a high from last minute work. You enjoy the adrenaline rush, and/or you rely on it. On your own, it is difficult to motivate yourself to complete tasks, but if you are given a deadline and are close to it, you are able to muster up the energy you need to finish tasks.

### Why does this work for you?

You find this fun, or at least, you don't have to rely on having a purpose to complete things. You are someone who could work in an Emergency Department because pressure organizes you. Without this, you would simply be distracted and get nothing done.

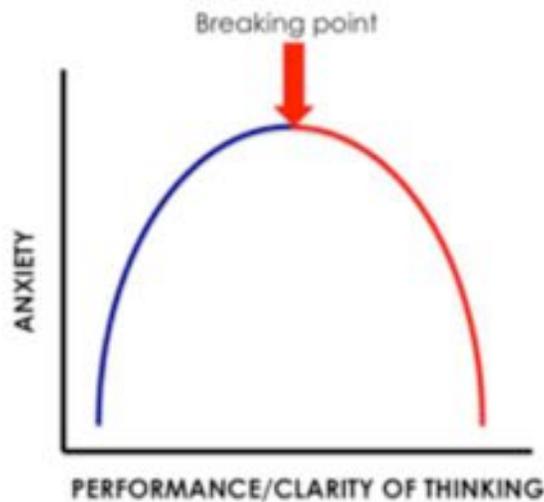
### Why is this a problem for you?

You may find this okay now, but the game you are playing is like Russian Roulette.

# RUSSIAN ROULETTE

## Arousal Procrastinator (Continued)

Look at this curve to understand why:



Anxiety serves you (and your thinking) well only some of the time. When you reach your breaking point, you start to burn out. Habitually stressing yourself out may impact you more than you think, and can actually make planning more difficult.

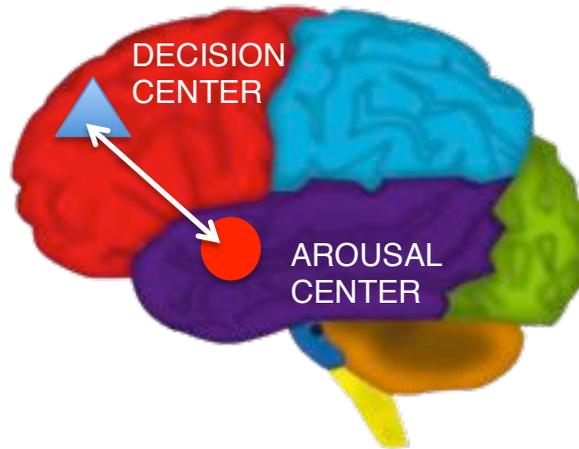
## What is happening in your brain?

In your brain, the following things are happening:



- Brain “freak out”
- Extreme energy consumption
- Brain fatigue
- Brain/heart stress connections
- More risk-taking, difficulty deciding, and less creative solutions

Diagrammatically, it looks like this:



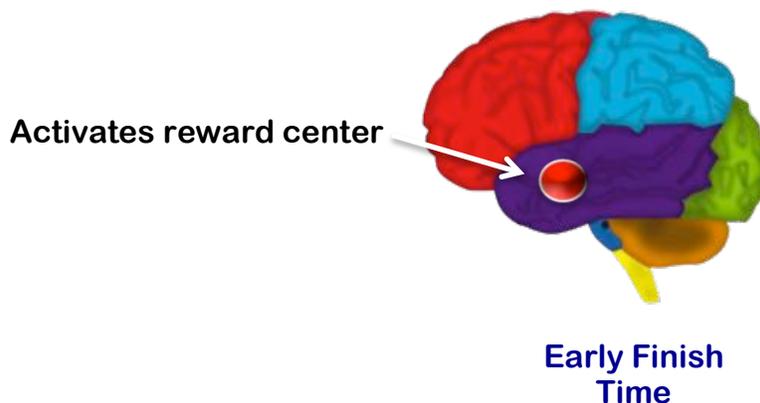
Excess arousal spreads to your thinking brain and disrupts it

## What can you do about it?

There are many things you can do about this, but for one, you need to change what rewards you. You get off on the excitement of the last minute, but do not realize that it is like using a drug. It feels good, but too much is not good for you.

Change what makes you excited. How about super-early finish times on projects? Changing the focus of reward and becoming excited about early completion will take the “stress” component out of the equation, and also allow you to think more clearly.

**STEP #1:** Consciously and deliberately train the “reward” button in your head to only respond to early completions that do not require a rush to the finish line.





## THE INDECISIVE PROCRASTINATOR

### Who are you?

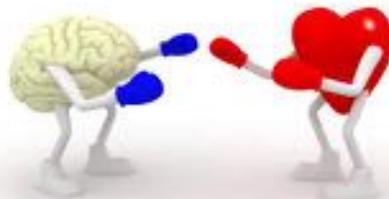
You are someone who thinks so much that you can't decide which direction to go in. You want to satisfy everyone, and often, you end up satisfying no one, including yourself. Sometimes you are confused about priorities and have a hard time declaring one thing more important than another. You resist multitasking.

### Why does this work for you?

You are a people pleaser and you don't mind being confused. You probably also enjoy thinking deeply and splitting hairs so you make sense at the most subtle level. You may also be a perfectionist and have a high quality of work.

### Why is this a problem for you?

You may find this okay now, but being indecisive does not help you in the long run. While you are thinking about things, your competition may get ahead, and even though you are more thorough, you may lose out in the end. Also, your indecision stems from conflict, and your inability to resolve these conflicts could impact the speed of your success.



## Indecisive Procrastinator (Continued)

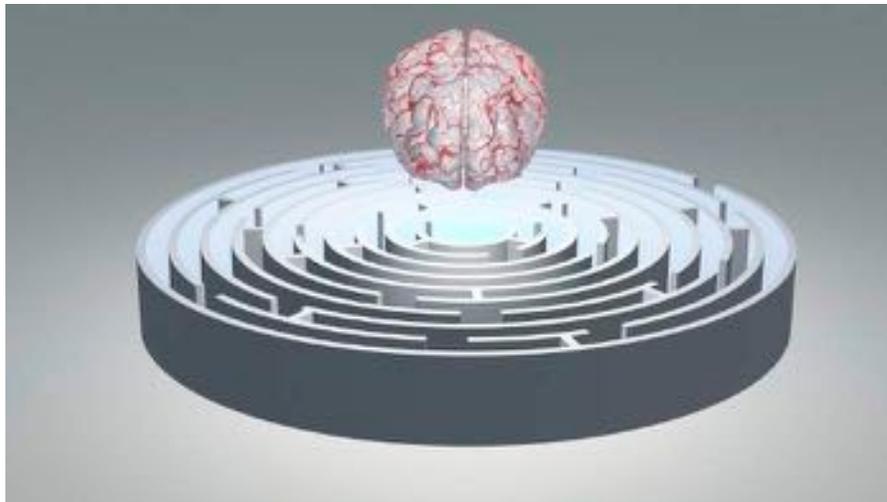
Does this look like you?



Thinking deeply helps, but not if it delays your action too much. Also, acting sooner rather than later may actually provide data you do not have

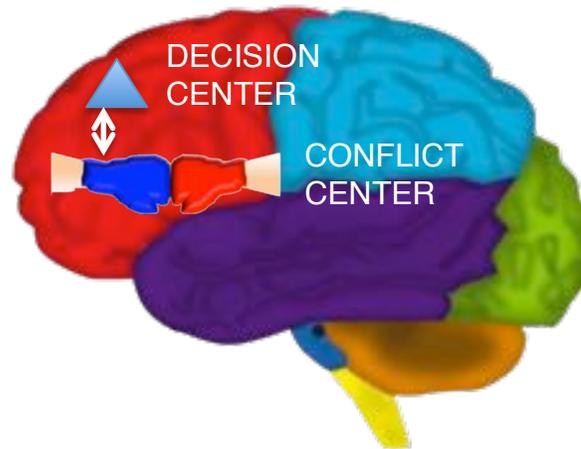
## What is happening in your brain?

In your brain, the following things are happening:



- Your brain is stuck in a perpetual maze
- Huge conflicts tire your brain out
- Your brain is slowed down by the pursuit of perfection
- Your brain cannot stay committed to a decision
- Old habits trap your brain

Diagrammatically, it looks like this:



Conflict (deeper in the brain) disrupts decisions

## What can you do about it?

There are many things you can do about this, but for one, you need to resolve any underlying conflicts. Then, make a decision to act by a certain time in a small way. It's fine if you change your mind about your priorities, just complete phases of each task and track them. This is a great way to jump-start your brain into action. **CUT YOUR THINKING TIMES DOWN** and activate your action center before you are ready.



Activate the action center sooner than usual. At first this will seem scary, but after a while, you will realize that action teaches you at least as much as thinking.



## THE AVOIDANT PROCRASTINATOR

### Who are you?

You are someone who would rather avoid the conflicts and anxiety than step into a decision at all. The idea of facing a task and completing it is far less appealing to you than avoiding it - even though this is a constant cause of anxiety.

### Why does this work for you?

You feel more comfortable, at least for a while. You don't have to feel the pressure and stress of an Arousal Procrastinator, and you don't have to feel the conflict of an Indecisive Procrastinator. Instead, you can function without emotional disturbance for long periods of time.

### Why is this a problem for you?

Even if you think you are not disturbed, the sense of incompleteness does trouble you and your brain.



## Avoidant Procrastinator (Continued)

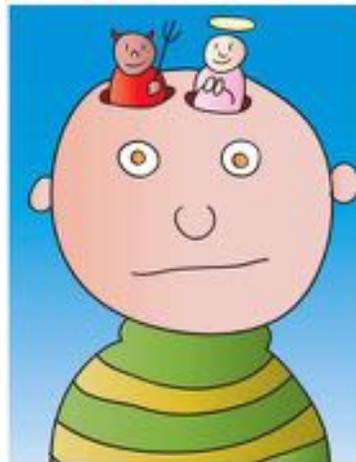
You are not invisible to yourself...



You can put a mask over the problem, but the problem is still there - and in all likelihood, it will not go away.

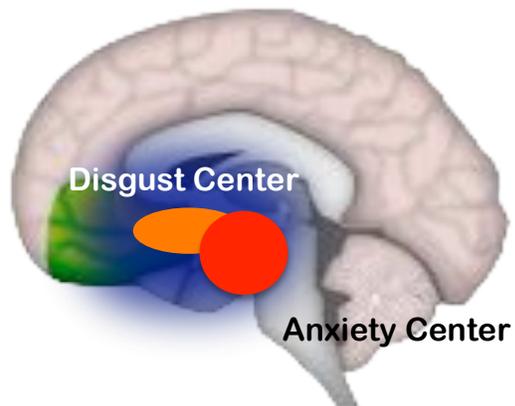
## What is happening in your brain?

In your brain, the following things are happening:



- You feel a constant state of guilt (but try to block it out)
- Consciously you are fine, but unconsciously your brain is still in a state of anticipatory anxiety
- Your brain is paralyzed by threat
- Your brain is afraid of loss
- Your brain is constantly exhausted and on the lookout

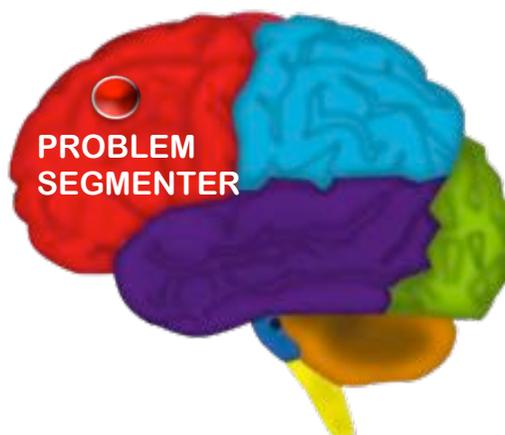
Diagrammatically, it looks like this:



Fear of loss activates anxiety and disgust, making you decide to do nothing

## What can you do about it?

There are many things you can do about this, but for one, you need to recognize that the underlying, subconscious anxiety is eating away at brain resources. Also, become more aware of, and responsive to, your guilt about not completing tasks. Segment tasks so they are not so frightening.



Break tasks down into parts to manage associated fears

## Conclusion

In some cases, you may engage in more than one type of procrastination. In fact, that is quite common. Regardless, start by identifying the type of procrastination most relevant to you, then work on overcoming your obstacles, moving forward as you develop new habits.

For each type, the principles are:

**AROUSAL----- REFRA**ME (reward for early finishes rather than last minute)

**INDECISIVE----- ACT** (act before thinking, learn, and act again)

**AVOIDANT----- SEGMENT** (segment tasks to reduce fears)

Once you start on this path, you will be much closer to task completion and avoiding delays.

**NEED MORE?** Contact us at [solutions@neurobusinessgroup.com](mailto:solutions@neurobusinessgroup.com)

