

Procrastination: Re-frame the challenge

Jeff Davidson

If you've ever seen Kenneth Branagh's "Henry V," you may recall his enactment of a miraculous redirection in military history. Greatly outnumbered by the French at the Battle of Agincourt, Henry offered a speech so stirring and inspiring that his troops fought with a vigor transcending that of which they previously were capable.

The king spoke of the glory of England and how history would look back on that day. By doing such, he reframed his troops' view of the forthcoming event as not merely a battle, with the odds stacked against them, but as one of the greatest encounters of history. Win or lose, his men would forever be remembered as the valiant soldiers that they were. So, too, we hear of coaches who give half-time pep talks that turn their teams around and enable them to achieve victory. Or, at least we hear this stuff in the movies.

In general, unpleasant tasks don't tend to get any more pleasant with the

passage of time. Certain tasks delayed, such as cleaning out the stables, get much worse over time. So, if you have to do something, you might as well take care of it now. There is often no advantage in putting the task off.

Easy tasks, or at least those you perceive as easy, are hardly ever the culprits. You get those tasks done relatively simply. The problem comes when you perceive a task as difficult, inconvenient, or scary. This is when you are likely to shift into procrastination mode. Reframe the task, however seemingly mundane, as something contributing to your long-term prosperity, growth, career advancement, or domestic tranquility, and you'll be far more productive.

Ah, but you protest! "How can a mundane task be exalted?" Generally it's not the task itself that is vital, but what the task represents, which could encompass:

- Keeping your word.



- Displaying your professionalism.
- Maintaining personal discipline.
- Serving as a model for others.
- Breaking past old barriers. ■

Jeff Davidson, MBA, CMC, author of *Breathing Space* and the *60 Second Self-Starter* is a leading work-life balance expert and professional speaker. See www.breathingspace.com