



# Winning Ways

A publication of

## Winning Ways

Volume 5, Number 5

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### Winning Ways NewsBits

Joan Fletcher will speak on June 7th at the McLean Chamber on "Lead Yourself First: The Key to Leading Others!" Sign up at [www.mcleanchamber.org](http://www.mcleanchamber.org)

Joan Fletcher will be speaking at the Tower Club on June 19th - check out the website for further information.

[www.winningwaysinc.com](http://www.winningwaysinc.com)

Next sales class at Tysons will start September 14th - classes are already filling. Register at [www.winningwaysinc.com](http://www.winningwaysinc.com)

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## Energy vs. Procrastination

Time management is one of the perennial problems we all face. As we look over our "to do" list for the past week, then look at the things we've actually gotten done, many of us are discouraged at how long the first list is and how short the second. And yet we feel like we've been so busy! We wind up feeling worn out after a day during which we didn't accomplish nearly as much as we wanted.

We know we need to work on our time management—but what we often fail to realize is that we need energy management at least as much. Time and energy play into one another in interesting ways. Most of the time when we procrastinate it's because we feel we don't have the energy to accomplish a particular task; but the catch is that procrastination drains energy, making it harder and harder to get started the longer we put the task off.

One of the best tricks for beating procrastination is to break the task down into its components. Those who procrastinate usually have the whole project on their minds, and it feels daunting. If you have 20 calls you must make in a day, the idea of sitting down to them can be overwhelming—much better to get up for a cup of coffee before you start in on them. Then the cup of coffee turns into a chat with a co-worker, into an errand you just remembered, and before you know it you've lost another two hours. And when you get back to your desk you're *still* overwhelmed by the idea of those 20 calls.

On the other hand, sitting down to make just one or two calls is not such a big deal. It's much easier to say, "I will make these two calls, and *then* I can get my coffee or run my errand." It's the mental habit of thinking of a project in its composite whole that gets a procrastinator bogged down and constantly looking for ways to avoid the task. If you tend to do this, make the habit of thinking through the actual steps it will take to complete your project, and then make a plan for when you will do the first step or two.

One advantage to this strategy is that often when you're actually working on a task, the energy you get from feeling that you're conquering it will propel you to complete more than you'd planned. Guilt over a task that you've been putting off also saps energy, and makes you even

more reluctant to get started; while the satisfaction of getting something done tends to increase energy, and motivate you to do more.

Another place the energy dynamic comes into play is in making excuses. Our instinct, once we start to feel guilty for putting something off, is to make excuses for why we weren't able to do it. Even if there's not someone we're immediately accountable to, we will tend to make excuses to ourselves. But coming up with excuses is another energy drainer. First of all, it takes a certain amount of creative energy, energy which you could be putting into simply getting the thing done. Second, it reinforces the idea that you are not in control; that your time manages you rather than you managing it.

Imagine having someone at your side whispering every day, "You don't have the power to do what you say you're going to do when you say you're going to do it; you are controlled by events around you and can only scramble to keep up." A voice like this would be discouraging and demotivating—but this is exactly what you're telling yourself every time you come up with excuses for why you didn't do something when you planned.

In contrast, taking responsibility for the use of your time is encouraging and motivational. Understanding that you have a finite amount of time at your disposal, and that *you decide* how it is going to be spent, reinforces your sense of being a self-leader, with control over your own life. This in turn will increase your energy level, and you will be more motivated to accomplish what you planned to accomplish.

Understanding the ways time and energy work off each other can be a tremendous benefit in helping you manage your time. The main trick is to avoid getting caught in the cycle of procrastination, which drains energy, which leads to more procrastination. Find ways to reinforce your energy level *through* the work you do, not in spite of it.

### Tips for time/energy management:

- Figure out when your energy tends to peak: maybe first thing in the morning, or after a meal, or after a successful meeting. Plan to get started on your most difficult tasks at these times.
- Make reasonable plans. If you plan to do more than you can realistically accomplish in the time you have, you will be discouraged and overwhelmed. Make a plan you know you can stick to, and then *stick to it*.
- Prioritize. Know which tasks are essential and which ones are optional. Then, refuse to feel guilty if you don't get around to some of the optional ones. Guilt is an energy drainer: you don't have time for it!