



# Steps for Dealing with Procrastination

By Dr. Linda Hancock

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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I really love creating but can easily procrastinate when it comes to getting rid of things. One of my least favourite jobs, in fact, is to sort through boxes of old papers, stored items and computer files.

Over the past few years, I was studying, teaching, writing books and working full-time so things have really piled up. I completed four degrees at four different universities and taught at three additional ones. Each of them has me on their mailing list. So do a number of organizations where I have memberships or hold executive positions. I've written three books and had columns published in two newspapers for the last eight years. And I've seen over 7,000 clients. That's a lot of paper and thousands of physical and electronic files.

Fortunately, all three of my children work for me and know me well. They often get rid of things behind my back when they think that I'm not paying attention or bring out a box of stuff to ask me about during one of my short breaks. I'm fine with that because it saves me from doing it and seems to bond them even closer together. I can tell by the muffled giggles that they enjoy being co-conspirators who think are getting away with something.

But this past year I had to face the fact that there was just too much of everything at the office and we were running out of space. We all knew that it was going to be a momentous task to go through every square inch of the place while still carrying on with the regular business activities of therapy, writing and speaking.

Well, we are on the homestretch and should have this major project completed in the next few weeks. Here are some of the strategies we used that might help you to clean up the excess in your life:

1. **Decide** that you are going to do the cleanup and get everything organized.
2. **Set a goal** outlining exactly what you want to achieve and a target date to complete the project. I have to admit that we are almost a year behind the original goal date but at least we are nearing the finish line - and that feels good.
3. **Consult with experts** so that you know exactly how long you need to keep information. Your accountant, regulatory bodies and membership organizations will be able to provide guidelines to help you with this.
4. **Obtain necessary supplies and equipment** - A good shredder should be at the top of your list - and lots of garbage bags. Make sure that you have file folders, labels and storage boxes or cabinets for the things you need to keep as well as external hard drives for the electronic files.
5. **Consider who might appreciate things you no longer need** - Rather than throwing out furniture or items that are treasures or still usable (but not by you), develop creative ways to recycle them.
6. **Hire people to help you** - I have been fortunate to have found a lady who was originally contracted for ten to twenty hours a week primarily for office filing. Neither of us had any idea that she would end up working almost full-time for eight months because of this cleanup project.

7. **Delegate** - My children each have expertise in different business areas. They educate me about various options for improving efficiency and organization. Once we have a good plan, they use their skills to perform the miracles that I could never accomplish.
8. **Commit to using the new system** - I certainly don't want things to pile up again so we are all implementing strategies to prevent that from happening.
9. **Celebrate** - Put a big check mark on the "to do" list. Remember to pat yourself and your team on the back! Oh, and enjoy living and working in your new efficient environment.