



# Are You Overwhelmed? Take Advantage of these Simple 'Neurohacking' Techniques

It's easy for leaders to end up mentally taxed and emotionally spent. That's why we need to manage our brains. Here's how.



By **Steve Farber** *Founder, the Extreme Leadership Institute*  [@stevefarber](https://twitter.com/stevefarber)



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The entrepreneur's [brain](#) at times can resemble the grand finale of a million-dollar fireworks show. Music's blaring and things are blowing up all over the place. And while it's pretty and entertaining, it's also out of control, hard to follow, and a bit exhausting.

It's easy during these times for leaders to end up mentally drained and emotionally [overwhelmed](#) by the high-speed, explosive challenges that come with managing things like people, budgets, time, energy and other assorted resources. That's because we typically neglect to properly manage the one thing that allows us to properly manage everything else--our brains.

But Daniel Schmachtenberger, a founder of the [Neurohacker Collective](#), points out that there are some tricks we can use--ways to hack our brains, if you will--that can help restore order to our chaos and balance to our leadership lives. Or any other part of our lives that's bursting across the skies.



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typically focused on physical results like improving your running time.

I wanted to hear and share Schmachtenberger's perspective on how entrepreneurs (like me) can make better use of that mushy tool between our ears.

Full disclosure: I was so impressed with what he had to say and with Neurohacker Collective's flagship product, Qualia, that I signed on as a channel partner for the company. But this article was created independently of that, not as an exchange.

It takes a certain type of mind to be a successful entrepreneur, he told me. No, he wasn't talking about a *warped mind*, although that might be true, too. Successful entrepreneurs, he said, have a strong working memory, which allows them to hold lots of information and possibilities and thereby make better informed decisions.

So I asked the obvious question: Is there a remedy for that overwhelmed, traffic-jam kind of a feeling that comes during the fireworks finale?

Sure there is: Hack your brain.

Here are a few ways to do it:

## **Design some constraints.**

One of the classic cognitive tools is to answer a couple of key questions that help focus your priorities through what Schmachtenberger calls "design by constraints."

He recommends these two as starting points: One, "What's the one thing I can do right now that increases my capacity to do everything else?" And, two, "If I could only work for one hour today, how would I spend that hour?" You can't do everything, Schmachtenberger said, so you have to do what's more important.

"When you give yourself more extreme constraints," he said, "it actually helps you get clearer on what's most important."

## **Delegate the urgent.**

The classic "Urgent-Important Matrix" originated with President Eisenhower, who recognized that the "urgent" isn't always the most "important." Many of the best leaders, Schmachtenberger says, seek to spend at least 90 percent of their time on things in the important but not in the urgent category.



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training other leaders on your team.

## Move, move, move.

Physical activity frees the brain from stress because it creates favorable chemical reactions and because it restores a sense of power and control to the mind. So make time throughout the day to use your body in short bursts of activity. It will help you feel strong and at ease.

You might work 30, 45 or 60 minutes, then take five to 15 minutes for the break. Then repeat that cycle. During the breaks, you do things like use the restroom, look out the window at some object in the distance to reorient your vision from small-screen fatigue, do a set of sit-ups or pushups, practice breathing exercises, or just walk a bit—all physical activities that improve your mental approach to work.

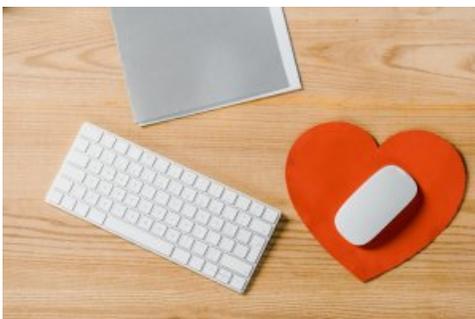
"By the end of the workday, you've actually had a significant workout," Schmachtenberger said. "You were never sedentary for a long period of time, so your body doesn't get stiff and circulation doesn't get pent up. You can actually chunk your to-do list based on those cycles and come into each one with a strong physical presence and a fresh mind."

Remaining calm and mentally focused during the fireworks of entrepreneurship can make the difference in every decision a leader faces. So managing the brain well provides the foundation for a healthy and successful approach to work and to life.

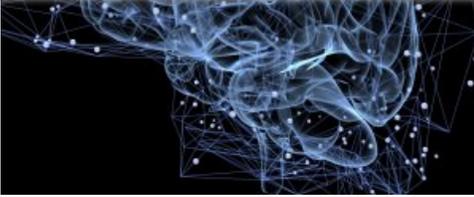
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PRODUCTIVITY

# The 3 Main Types of Procrastinators, According to Psychology

The signs of which category you're in are easy to spot (and fix).



By **Wanda Thibodeaux** *Copywriter, TakingDictation.com*  [@WandaThibodeaux](https://twitter.com/WandaThibodeaux)



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Generally speaking, [procrastination](#) isn't your friend if you want to be a success. But according to Dr. Ellen Hendriksen, clinical psychologist at Boston University's Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders, there are just three main types of procrastinators. If you know which one you are, it might be easier for you to [take charge of your agenda](#) and [finish tasks when you should](#).

## 1. The Avider

You put things off just because they make you feel bad, whether the specific emotion is anxiety, boredom, overwhelmedness, or sadness. This is based in the [pleasure principle](#) outlined by Sigmund Freud, which says that people have a natural drive to seek what feels good and to avoid whatever's painful. This strategy isn't always completely successful, according to Hendriksen. You can feel negative emotions because of the procrastination, such as stress from having to squeeze the job into a shorter time.

### You're probably an avoider if

- You schedule undesirable tasks far out in the calendar or convince others there isn't time on the agenda for them.
- You put items related to the job where you can't visually see them.
- You get anxious when others talk about the job you're avoiding.
- You make excuses about why the work isn't done.
- You make lots of to-do lists to convince yourself there are other priorities.
- You have trouble coming up with concrete plans, as they make completion feasible.



- Find a buddy to encourage you and offer positive accountability.
- Self-reflect about the specific reasons the job isn't attractive to you.
- Outline all the pros of having the job completed.
- Identify all the skills or knowledge that qualifies you to do the job.

## 2. The Optimist

You consistently think a task isn't going to take as long as it does, or that you have more time to finish the job. Research by Jeff Conte, psychologist at San Diego State University, identifies optimism as a key trait among those who are chronically late. The research also suggests that some [people actually perceive time differently](#) and feel like it passes more slowly than it does.

### You're probably an optimist if

- Others tell you that you're overconfident (or less kindly, delusional).
- You brush off warnings from others about deadlines or consequences, assuming that those consequences won't happen and therefore aren't worth the worry.
- You fail to see the pattern of times where your procrastination produced a negative result.
- You almost never create a Plan B.
- You initially impress others with your attitude, only to have them eventually quit following or recommending you because of your lack of follow-through.

### You might fix the behavior if you

- Set some unobtrusive alerts at regular intervals so you stay more aware of your pacing.
- Ask for scheduling input from others; create your daily agenda using their assessment of required time rather than your own.
- Use time logging or other tools to produce metrics that can verify your track record or where time is leaking away from you.
- Identify specific "points of no return" on the calendar where certain consequences no longer will be avoidable; create a SMART action plan to avoid each consequence.

## 3. The Pleasure Seeker

You don't do what you're supposed to do until you genuinely feel like doing it, which doesn't always happen. Here, it's not so much about avoiding a job as it is deliberately choosing something you like better. As Hendriksen notes, this is bad news because others can get frustrated and pick up your slack, which can breed resentment and earn you a reputation as a slacker.



- Have little patience when jobs aren't what you enjoy.
- You accept a live-in-the-moment mindset and therefore don't spend much time in reflection or planning.
- You often pivot the conversation to something else you're enthusiastic about.
- Others describe you as lazy or inconsiderate, but not as incapable.

### **You might fix the behavior if you**

- Reward yourself each time you do the job you rather would put off.
- Home in on what's best or most beneficial about the process.
- Give yourself small breaks throughout the job to do something you like so you don't see one long period of torture ahead of you.
- Be honest with yourself that you might never be in the mood; focus on how you will feel after getting it off your plate.
- Find ways to incorporate what you find enjoyable into the job, such as using a specific tool or working in a certain location.

No matter what type of procrastinator you happen to be, being able to do what's required *when* it's required is a fantastic goal. If you're realistic and invite others to keep you on track, reaching that objective will be no sweat at all.



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