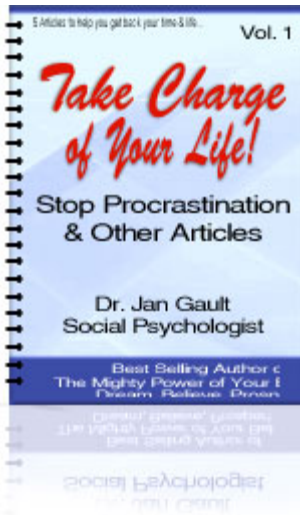


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Cybercolumns by Dr. Jan Gault

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of  
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Articles to help you get back  
your time & life...

# Take Charge of Your Life!

Vol. 1

Stop Procrastination &  
Other Articles  
**By Dr. Jan Gault**  
**Social Psychologist**

Best Selling Author of  
***The Mighty Power of  
Your Beliefs***  
***Dream, Believe, Prosper!***

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*Stop  
Procrastination  
Now!*



*By Jan L. Gault, Ph.D.*

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## Stop Procrastination Now!

Have you ever felt like just not doing something? We all have, and there are times after a stress-filled day that's exactly what you need... to be doing nothing. But what about all those times when you think about exercising or starting a project, and you meet resistance—your mind and body refuse to cooperate? How can you turn these lazy feelings around and get on with the task at hand?

### Getting Started

One tool for stamping out procrastination is to make use of Power Questions. Let's say two weeks ago you started an exercise program to get in shape, but this morning you flat out don't feel like it. You can't seem to get yourself going. Ask yourself a Power Question (PQ) like "Alright, Terry, can you do this for five minutes?" "Can you jog for five minutes?" "Do stretch exercises?" "Bike?"

When I was training for running my first marathon, some rainy days I'd look outside and just thinking about

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doing my usual ten mile morning run made me tired. So I'd say to myself, "Hey Jan, can you run for five minutes?" "Can you run one mile?" And I'd answer myself, "Yes, I can do that." Of course what happened was, after the five minutes, I'd built up momentum, felt good about myself for making the effort, and when I asked myself, "Can you do five minutes more?" the answer was, "Sure, no problem." The next thing I knew, the ten miles were behind me.

### **Stuck on a Task?**

Power questions require a response and trigger action. Maybe you're stuck on a task and getting nowhere.

Pessimistic self talk has taken over with thoughts like, "I'll never finish this. It's hopeless." What can you do? Try backing off from the task and switching your focus away from what you're supposed to be doing. Ask yourself this PQ, "Do I really want to do this?"

Sometimes when you're unable to go forward with a project, you're on the wrong path - it's not right for you at this point in time and you need to change direction. For example, one of

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my clients, Diane, was in college majoring in accounting and finding every class a chore and a struggle to get through. She was resisting and fighting it at every turn. Even the simplest assignments were getting her down. After switching her major to a more personality compatible field, her interest and energy level soared.

Like Diane, it could be that you're in the wrong college major, the wrong career, or striving for an achievement out of harmony with your personality and purpose. It may be time to rethink what you truly want and what's right for you. When we stray too far from our mission in life, nature sends warning signals. Distress and procrastination result.

When you ask yourself the PQ, "Is this something I genuinely want to complete? Is it right for me?" it brings you to a choice point where you consciously decide. "Yes, this activity will move me closer toward goals that I definitely want to pursue," or "No, by golly, it's absolutely NOT something that represents me and who I am."

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Bringing yourself to a choice point allows you to either fully commit to the completion of a task or let go of it without feeling guilty. Be careful however about using this tool as an excuse for “giving up” on something just because you’re not in the mood one day, or temptations are knocking at your door.

### **Feeling Overwhelmed & Frustrated?**

What about when you’re feeling overwhelmed and bogged down? Murphy’s law strikes, everything goes wrong, and your computer is acting up... again. Ask yourself, “What can I do?” “What small step might I take right now that will move me in the direction of my goals?” Maybe it’s just organizing your files, making a telephone call you’ve been putting off, going to the store to purchase some needed computer supplies or reading a journal article. There’s always something you can do that will bring you closer toward your goals.

### **Take Charge!**

The next time procrastination threatens to plant its menacing grip on you, ask

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yourself a Power Question and take charge. "Can I do it for 5 minutes?" Yes, you can. "Is this something I really want to complete... that's right for me at this time in my life?" Answer honestly, reach a decision point, then either commit to completion of the job at hand or let go of it and get on with your life.

When overwhelmed by too much to do and too little time (aren't we always?), ask yourself: "What can I do? What small action step can I take right now to advance me toward my goals?" Building your motivation with these three power questions will help keep you on the path to success in all of your endeavors.



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*Are Limiting Beliefs Keeping  
You Out of the Prosperity  
Loop?*



*By Jan L. Gault, Ph.D.*

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## **Are Limiting Beliefs Keeping You Out of the Prosperity Loop?**

I've spoken with many potential entrepreneurs who have excellent ideas for products and services as well as good ideas for solving pressing social problems. Unfortunately, the public never hears about them because they don't have a strong enough belief in themselves to follow through to completion. They're not only doing themselves a disservice, they're robbing the public. Whatever your field of endeavor, there are three core beliefs that impact your prosperity the most.

### **Beliefs Essential for Success & Prosperity:**

1. **The first and possibly the most important is to have a solid belief in yourself and your capabilities...to know that *you* have the power to influence the course of events.**

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If at a gut level, you believe life is a crapshoot—that it's mostly up to chance and fate—and that what you do doesn't really make much difference, you're not going to have the drive to get out there and make things happen or to sustain you when things go wrong.

When Murphy's Law strikes and everything goes wrong at the least opportune time, you won't have the inner strength to keep going. Without a deeply held belief in yourself, you are easy prey to temptations and distractions.

2. **A second important belief to hold is that your decisions and actions matter—regardless of the outcome—regardless of how many rejections you get or how often you fail.**

Maybe you won't always get the job, the promotion, or make that big sale. Perhaps in pursuing a college degree, you'll fail a course or two. Maybe the speech you give will flop; or the business you

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sank your life savings into will go belly up. That's life.

But success is not about how many failures you have, but how fast you recover, learn from your mistakes and continue toward your goals. It's how you view your failures and what you do about them that make the difference. You need to always pat yourself on the back when you've had the courage to take a risk—regardless of how it turns out.

3. **A third essential belief is a deep conviction that you are deserving of your desires and dreams—that you are worthy of any benefits or rewards which might result.**

This is not arrogance or conceit. If at a deep subconscious level you don't believe you deserve fame and fortune, or whatever the results of your labors might be, two consequences are likely:

One, you'll get right on the verge of achieving an important goal and then do something to sabotage it. Or, a

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second scenario is that you'll achieve some measure of success but it will be short-lived and you'll be unable to sustain it.

In short, you believe that your efforts will tip the success scale in your favor.

**You** are the determining factor.

William James, noted Harvard Psychologist and arguably one of the greatest philosophers of all time, tells us that "The most important factor to success—whatever your undertaking—is to have an unwavering belief in yourself."



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*Put More Time & Enjoyment  
Into Your Days!*



*By Jan L. Gault, Ph.D.*

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*Put More Time & Enjoyment  
Into Your Days!*

Social scientists have found that there is often an inverse relationship between how we spend our time and what we find satisfying and fun. That is to say, many of us get involved in pastimes we don't especially like, and conversely, neglect doing those things we enjoy most.

A client will typically tell me that they "love" a particular activity such as playing the piano, going to the theatre or swimming, only to find that they haven't been near a piano since childhood and only rarely attend plays or go swimming. On the other hand, they are regularly going to the movies, watching television and attending social functions that do little more than give them a headache.

Reasons why will vary. Sometimes we have simply gotten into a routine and not given much thought or energy to changing it. We may fail to consider all the options that are available and be falling back on old standbys even

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though they are providing us with only minimal satisfaction.

At other times, we let ourselves get caught up in popular activities and fads that are totally wrong for us. As a runner, I'm frequently asked if I recommend jogging to my clients. The answer is, it depends entirely on the person. What's right for one person isn't always best for another. There are far too many exciting, fun pastimes available to spend time suffering through something that's a grind.

### **Try Something New**

On the other hand, we don't always know how much we might like a particular sport or activity until we try it out. Your enjoyment of any given game or endeavor will tend to increase along with your level of skill. As you become more proficient at tennis, the game starts being fun.

When you dare to run in your first 10K race and discover that you can actually finish and not come in last, jogging suddenly takes on new meaning. Your first attempt at learning to use all the features of your new computer can well be frustrating until you get the

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hang of it. Then, the next thing you know, you're a computer buff.

### **Do a List Assessment**

To assess how closely your leisure pastimes align with your likes and dislikes, take a look at how you're presently spending the bulk of your time. A good way to begin is by making two lists. On the first, write down all the activities you're involved in now and that you truly enjoy.

On a second list, jot down anything you're doing that is providing you with little pleasure or value. Examples could be: time spent chairing a committee for which you reluctantly agreed, aimless conversations on the telephone, reading the newspaper, wasted shopping time, or playing bridge due to pressures from your mate.

Now ask yourself how the total amount of your spare time is distributed between the two lists? What proportion of your time is consumed by activities you dislike or feel so-so about relative to those you enjoy and that enhance your life?

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## **Mindstorm**

Next, use your imagination and consider some of the things that you'd like to be doing, but aren't. Over the years, what has especially sparked your interest? Maybe it's a hobby you had back in high school and would still enjoy but have neglected over the years. Do a little mindstorming. What strikes your fancy? Most of us have something we've always wanted to try but never gotten around to actually doing. Examine your interests in different creative endeavors. Would you like to build a web site, perform at a local playhouse, paint, sing karaoke, take dance lessons, make a movie?

If you're athletically inclined, accomplishing a challenging physical feat can be a source of pleasure: swimming a mile, finishing a triathlon, even sky diving or hang gliding. If you live close to a lake or ocean, take advantage of the many water sports available: wind surfing, canoeing and kayaking.

Time is your most valuable resource. Set aside a few minutes now to reflect on how your leisure measures up in

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meeting your needs and adding more zest and enjoyment to your life. Let go of tired time habits that neither advance you toward your goals nor enhance your life and well-being.



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*Take the Burden Off Work*



*by Jan L. Gault, Ph.D.*

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## Take the Burden off Work

“Maybe what I need is a new job,” is a comment I hear frequently from clients.

H.M. Greenberg, a New Jersey psychologist, in a study of 180,000 workers discovered that 80% of us do not like our jobs. We roll over in bed in the mornings and wish we could just stay there. And how we love to get away from our place of employment! You have only to look at the happy, smiling faces all about you on a Friday afternoon before a three-day weekend.

Much of this job discontentment is a result of our unrealistic career expectations. We expect our work to be 100% satisfying. We look for a job that will offer challenge, let us develop out creative talents, realize self-fulfillment, give us the recognition we crave, plus be interesting and enjoyable. At the same time, we expect our work to meet our needs for security, provide health and life insurance benefits, a pension plan, a liberal expense allowance and lots of perks.

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But no job or career can meet all of our needs and desires. While some occupations, work settings and positions are better than others in coming up to our standards, even the best of jobs fall short.

This is expressed regularly by men and women in my consulting practice.

One of my former clients, a vice-president in charge of marketing for a progressive computer firm, described his position as meaningful and challenging, yet in keeping a Time Reactor Log in which he recorded his responses to daily activities, found that less than 15% of his responsibilities could be called creative or challenging. The biggest chunk of the day was spent in semi-productive meetings, taking care of correspondence and unwelcome interruptions.

Another client, a dedicated seventh grade teacher, estimated that with keeping discipline, administering tests and grading papers, only a small fraction of her classroom time could be called fulfilling in terms of communicating ideas and stimulating student's curiosity.

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A number of physicians, attorneys and other professionals have also confessed to me that a major part of their duties are perfunctory, routine and just plain boring. If we add to these the thousands of other jobs in existence with even fewer opportunities for need-fulfillment, it is difficult to see why we cling to our career pipedreams.

What is the solution? Instead of continually searching for the nonexistent “ideal” career and being forever frustrated, start shifting your focus from work to leisure – that other one-third-plus of life. By looking to your non-work time—evenings, weekends, holidays – to fulfill some of your important needs, you will be happier on the job and off.

Many physicians and teachers, for example, disillusioned by the lack of creative opportunities at work, have taken to writing novels in their spare time. And people from all occupations are finding challenge and recognition off the job in sports, games, and various artistic endeavors. Aristotle, the great philosopher, has maintained



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that a person's highest goal of self-understanding is best found in leisure.

Your non-work time can be a powerful resource for meeting your needs for creativity, self-expression and learning, as well as serving your romance and love needs, health and fitness, relaxation and play.

As we stop looking to our employer as the all-embracing Big Sugardaddy to take care of our multitude of needs and give leisure a higher role in our life, we'll be less inclined to feel dissatisfied. Freed from an unrealistic work-mind-set, you'll find it easier to assume your on-the-job duties and perform the necessary tasks to the best of your ability, content in the knowledge that your major desires are going to be met after five.



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*Add More Spark To Your  
Life!*



*by Jan L. Gault, Ph.D.*

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## **Add More Spark to Your Life!**

Is your life just humdrum or crowded with too many activities and obligations? Try these suggestions to brighten up your evenings and make your days go better.

### **Set yourself up in advance with something to look forward to after work.**

Always have something at the end of the workday that you can genuinely anticipate. It needn't be anything big. It could be plans to get together with a cheery old friend who you've been out of touch with, or playing a new game with a family member. How long since you've been to the library or bookstore browsing to check out some of the latest books? Recall that time when you were in the middle of a good book and how you hated to put it down – you couldn't wait to get back to it. Maybe there's an old favorite collecting dust on your bookshelf.

Have you looked at the evening course and lecture series offered by your Community Colleges recently? Art

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classes, foreign language for travelers, investment know-how, computer skills, sailing, gardening, learning and lecture series on virtually every topic are available. These are usually given at a nominal cost and are an excellent venue to meet people with similar interests or take up a new hobby.

**Socially overextended? Plan an evening off.**

On the other hand, maybe your problem is not one of what-to-do but too much doing. If your nonwork time is crowded with a hectic schedule of social obligations, the nicest thing you can do for yourself is to take an evening off – an evening of quiet relaxation at home all alone. This will be absolutely marvelous to look forward to if you’ve just experienced a whirlwind week of events prefaced by “I shouldn’t miss....I must attend...they’re counting on me...I have to go...”

Give yourself a break and peace of mind in the morning by deciding that you do not “have to” attend anything tonight and are going to give yourself the luxury of going home and basking in the privacy of your own thoughts

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without invasion from anyone. And don't forget to turn off your phone.

**Schedule some special treats for yourself periodically.**

We all need periodic breaks from our day-to-day routine. Have a special treat scheduled in the not-too-distant future that you can think about and focus on when events in your life are just humdrum or you're feeling overwhelmed and frustrated at work. If you have an enticing event coming up to shift your attention to when things aren't going well, this will carry you through a lot of tough, tension-laden days.

It could be one of the island boat excursions that are so popular now for busy people who want to unwind for the weekend and relax out on the water. Check out your local music and food events. Plan to attend a special art exhibit or theatre production. Consider trying something new, whether that be a new sport, pilates, or just a picnic outing with friends. How about treating yourself to a Health Spa Center with the works: Jacuzzi, mineral water swim, hot towels, and professional massage?


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Be sure to select a function that is right for you and that you can get enthusiastic about. By always having a definite, special leisure activity coming up, you will feel a glow and spark of excitement each time you think about it during the workday.



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*A Personal Thank You  
from Dr. Jan Gault*

I hope you found these articles helpful. May your life be rich with rewarding moments! I value your input and would love to hear from you. I invite you to Email me at my personal Email address: [drjan1@earthlink.net](mailto:drjan1@earthlink.net).

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## AUTHOR PROFILE



*Jan L. Gault, Ph.D.*

is a social psychologist, university instructor, creative time specialist, and the author of six books including:

✓ *[The Mighty Power of your Beliefs...Dream, Believe, Prosper;](#)*  
**Your beliefs impact every aspect of your life—your personal relationships, financial fitness, even your health and happiness. Learn how to displace limiting beliefs with empowering beliefs and change your life!**

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***Free Time—Making Your Leisure Count*** (Wiley & Sons).

Dr. Jan's programs have been presented in universities and through business and professional organizations worldwide. Jan has been featured on over 200 radio/television networks and media throughout the United States and Canada. Her articles, books excerpts and reviews have been published in *Glamour Magazine*, *San Francisco Business Journal*, *Bottom Line Personal*, *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Fedco Reporter* among others.

Jan lives in Hawaii where she teaches university classes in psychology and has a private practice specializing in personal-global empowerment and better living.

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**Jan Gault International©**

P.O. Box 75315 Eaton Square

Honolulu, Hawaii 96836

Tel 808-593-3648 Fax 800-851-6114

**[drjan1@earthlink.net](mailto:drjan1@earthlink.net)**

**<http://www.drjan.net/dream>**

