

Wynne Leon (00:00)

Have you ever put off starting something? Not because you didn't care, but because you cared so much you wanted to get it right? Maybe the task felt too big, the path wasn't clear, or you worried you weren't ready. In this episode of The Life of Try, we're exploring the surprising power of beginning before we feel prepared. I'll share a simple 10-minute strategy that helps me move through resistance.

Why an unfinished task can keep working in our minds and how one imperfect first step can create real momentum. Because sometimes the bravest thing we can do isn't finish. It's simply start.

What if the thing standing between you and progress? Isn't talent, time, or confidence, but the belief that you have to be ready before you begin. There's a line often attributed to Pablo Picasso. I am always doing that which I cannot do in order that I may learn how to do it.

But the trails appears to lead back to Vincent Van Gogh who wrote about continuing to make what he couldn't do yet so that he could learn. Either way, the message lands. We don't learn first and then begin. We begin and that's how we learn. I feel that truth in my work as a computer consultant. Technology is always changing. A simple task like adding a logo to a website.

something I've done for years. But the button moves, the menu changes, or the process suddenly has three more steps. Multiply that by the ways I customize technology and even familiar work can carry a little uncertainty. Most of the time, experience helps me find the way. But my brain has learned that any task might contain a surprise

And sometimes that tiny possibility is enough to make starting feel heavy. Maybe you know that feeling. The cursor is blinking, the project is waiting, and suddenly a word game, a snack, or reorganizing a drawer feels incredibly important.

And if that can happen to me with work I've done for 25 years, of course it can happen when we sit down to write, take photographs, learn an instrument, change careers, or begin anything close to our hearts. So here's one strategy that works for me. I start when I don't have time to finish. I give myself a small window, 10 minutes, maybe 15. I'm not trying to complete the post, solve the problem, or polish the code.

I'm only trying to make a beginning. I can write a rough opening, sketch an outline, name the file, or leave myself one useful note. And because I know I won't be doing it all day, the resistance softens. The blank page is no longer asking me for brilliance. It's only asking me for a first mark.

Later I discovered there's psychology behind why this can help.

In nineteen twenty seven, psychologist Bluma Zeigarnik published experiments comparing memory for completed and interrupted tasks.

The idea that unfinished work can remain more mentally accessible became known as the Zeigarnik effect. Later, research has found that the effect varies by circumstance, so I don't take it as a magical productivity law.

But the practical insight is powerful. An unfinished task, or even a specific plan for returning to it, can keep the next step available in our minds. That means a small beginning can do two important things. It removes the blank page, you're no longer beginning from nothing, and it gives your mind something to work with. The question shifts from how do I do all of this to what comes next? There's

also something valuable about making the first attempt yourself. AI can be useful, but when it hands us a complete draft before we've wrestled with an idea, we may miss the cognitive roots that give us ownership and help us know what we really want to say. Sometimes the rough beginning is not a wasted effort. It's how we build the mental footholds for the work. So think of the task you've been resisting.

Maybe it's connecting your email to your domain. Maybe it's writing the first page of something that matters deeply to you. Maybe it's making the call, opening the application, or trying the skill you're not sure you can master. Don't ask yourself to finish it today. Ask yourself to begin it. Set a timer for 10 minutes, make one imperfect move, leave yourself a clear next step, then walk away.

Knowing that momentum has already started. Because courage is not always a giant leap.

Sometimes courage is opening the document, typing the first sentence, trying before you feel ready. That's the life of try. Not waiting until you know how, but trusting that the trying will teach you. What will you start today?

Thanks for listening. If today's episode inspired you to take one small step, keep that momentum going by checking out our episode, How to Build Habits That Stick with Dr. Mike Rucker. He shares how bringing more fun and enjoyment into the process can help us stay motivated, become more resilient, and make positive changes easier to sustain. Because starting matters, but so does finding a way to keep showing up.

Until next time, stay curious, keep trying, and remember. You don't have to have it all figured out. You just have to take the next step.