



Advice for the Home Team Toolbox

by Dr. Debi Warner

Dear Dr. Debi,

I am looking back at how much I get finished and I want to accomplish more on my projects from now on. How can I change my whole approach?

Signed, Slow as Snails

Dear Wanting to Wiggle On,

This is the time of year that folks do get into the mood of making resolutions, yet resolving to change is only part of the deal – the rest is making it happen. So, let's look at what is involved in your turn around.

You might get hung up at different parts of the projects. Is it the first step phase? Do you pick up materials and then don't ever get to use them? Is your garage filled with projects of projects, left untouched? This is the First Step hesitation problem, which we will get into in a minute.

Another hang up is the demolition & abandonment type. Do you prepare a spot for a project, demolishing walls or finish work then take forever to actually get to the project itself? Yes, we will consider that too.

Then there is the smooth sailing till a hard part is reached and then dead halt. Perhaps you have the most frustrating style of all – the nearly finished and stop shy of last touch.

All of these require some basic elements – communication with your Home Team about your plans, a reasonable schedule that you stick to, including some thinking time in your plans, and facing your limitations honestly. All of these will be good for your skill development, so you will improve even if you don't get it perfect.

If you are picking up lots of project materials and not touching them, likely you are not planning completely where your focus will be. Sales are everywhere; and so many enticing materials beg to come home with you. It is easier to buy them than put them in. Your skill that needs to develop is delay-communication-planning. I suggest you return to the store with the cool materials (meaning you leave the first time without buying) and bring your partner back with you.

Ask your partner to "be realistic" with you and debate the need and use of the new materials. Likely they will help you balance your enthusiasm with the practicalities of space and time. Be prepared to hear practical limits and get ready to nod and let it in. You can even hear these limits and remain in your grown-up state, deliberately not shrinking to the feeling that you are being chastised as a child. You can

say, "I'm glad I asked you. Thanks." You have just grown out of the spree-type project collector, with that simple interaction. As you practice it, you will find it smoother and easier to do. And you will be able to walk around in your garage, too!

So – are you the one who likes to demolish the spot that needs a project? Do you do it to provoke yourself to get going? Do you do it because you hated the old look? Do you do it to commit the team to the project that you favor? All of those styles indicate the need for two things: One, control of your urge to get going; and Two, communication with your Home Team about priorities of projects and planning when they can be done.

Controlling your urge to just hammer away and tear out a wall that is frustrating traffic flow, a view to the TV, or just plain ugly, can be a small calling. This is where your change comes in. You can coach yourself to hang on and wait on these moves until after you have settled a plan with your Home Team. It may feel awkward to wait on such a good impulse; if so, maybe go toss wood on the pile instead. It will work out well in the end. Congratulate yourself if you manage to avoid a tempting demolition; it will reinforce the changes you want, toward finishing more projects.

Do you abandon the project when you reach a hard part? Fixing this takes courage in a way you would not expect. It is not the answer to just surge on like John Wayne leading the charge in battle. Actually, the answer is more likely in taking a breather, getting consultation from books and more experienced carpenters, and then setting a get-going time to carefully move back into the project.

Lastly – is the final nail just too hard to put in? It clinches the project and means it is over. Like the ending to a novel you could not put down; suddenly the whole purpose of things is gone. As long as the last bit is still hanging, the task is still yours. This can be very hard indeed. You may need some ceremony, privately done, to detach yourself from the project and place the final spike, trim, outlet covers, fittings, or other last details. This is not as weird as it sounds. When they built the continental railroads, they had ceremonies of the placing of the last spike. In fact it is the picture we usually see from those projects.

What you learn in tackling each of these project hangers will enhance your own ability to measure your moves, and also improve your relating to your Home Team, too. You will make progress on your changes, as you tackle each, one at a time. Happy Home Team!

Dr. Debi

Dr. Debi Warner is the Founder of Renovation Psychology® radio host, and author of the book, Putting the Home Team to Work, available now online at RenovationPsychology.com. Dr. Debi provides advice for greater domestic harmony to folks who are renovating their home – for True Home Improvement. This column is offered for enjoyment and enhancement and is not intended to replace your personal medical care. Photo by Bob Jenks, St. Johnsbury, Vt.

Dr. Debi has a consultation practice, from her studio in Littleton, NH, with house calls all over the East coast.

© 2010 Renovation Psychology® Visit www.RenovationPsychology.com Questions are welcome.