

How to
Finish
Everything
You Start

HABITS TO TRANSFORM
YOUR LIFE



Jan Yager

For sale in the Indian Subcontinent only



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Praise for

How to Finish Everything You Start:

“Unfinished tasks are truly an epidemic. I was inspired by reading Jan Yager’s *How to Finish Everything You Start* and I also experienced deep introspection in doing the exercises.”

—Ajeet Khurana, CEO

“Dr. Jan Yager’s new book, *How to Finish Everything You Start*, zeros in on the real reasons why we often don’t finish what we begin, and more importantly, what we can do to get over the obstacles that stand in our way.”

—Don Gabor, author of *How to Start a Conversation and Make Friends*

“In this fast-paced, get-it-done environment, the real pressure is that to compete you must complete. Jan Yager draws on original research and her expertise in time management to help you identify the possible causes behind your failure to finish. She offers real-life examples, practical tips, and she poses thoughtful questions to help you enhance your performance and get the right things done. A great read from start to finish!”

—Linda Swindling, JD, CSP, author of *The Manager’s High-Performance Handbook*

“Jan Yager’s *How to Finish Everything You Start* is a must-read for anyone who is a go-getter out of the gate, but who often or just from time to time lacks the follow-through it takes to cross the finish line. In this straight-forward guide, Dr. Yager shares pragmatic and actionable advice which will move you to get things done. Read this book – and finish it – to learn from a prolific producer who truly understands the importance of, and the art of, completion.”

—Wendi McNeill, Founder, Charli Jane Speakers

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PART 1: CAUSES

CHAPTER

1

The Epidemic of Unfinished Everything and Its Consequences

Have you ever had trouble finishing something, a project at work, or something more personal such as a book, or even a diet? You're not alone. In fact, there's an epidemic of a "failure to finish" syndrome sabotaging not only our lives but the world we live in.

What's behind this epidemic? There are multiple causes. As my research over three decades into time management confirms: one reason is that too many of us are doing too much at once which is leading to the unfinished tasks or projects syndrome that led you to pick up this book.

The second is something I call "distractionitis." People who suffer from this are too easily distracted and are effortlessly pulled away from one task, to do something else. Before you know it, you soon find yourself with too many unfinished jobs or projects. Those unfinished responsibilities start to pile up and you feel overwhelmed. If this happens at work, you could not only be sabotaging yourself but your entire team. It could even put you at risk of being fired.

In our personal lives the effects of failing to finish may be subtler than in the business world, but there are consequences, nevertheless. You never got around to remodeling the bathroom which makes it that much harder to put your house on the market. You moved in a while ago, but there are still unpacked boxes. If only you could lose that last ten pounds, you could finally fit into your wardrobe.

In a survey, over 200 men and women were asked about the #1 project or task that they have left unfinished. Here are just some of their answers:

Work- or school-related

- "Making a vision video for the organization"
- "Finishing an online class"
- "Writing a report of my industrial field visit"

- “Completing my degree”
- “Complete the song I’m writing”
- “Writing a novel”
- “Finding a new job”
- “Doing my lesson plan two weeks ahead”

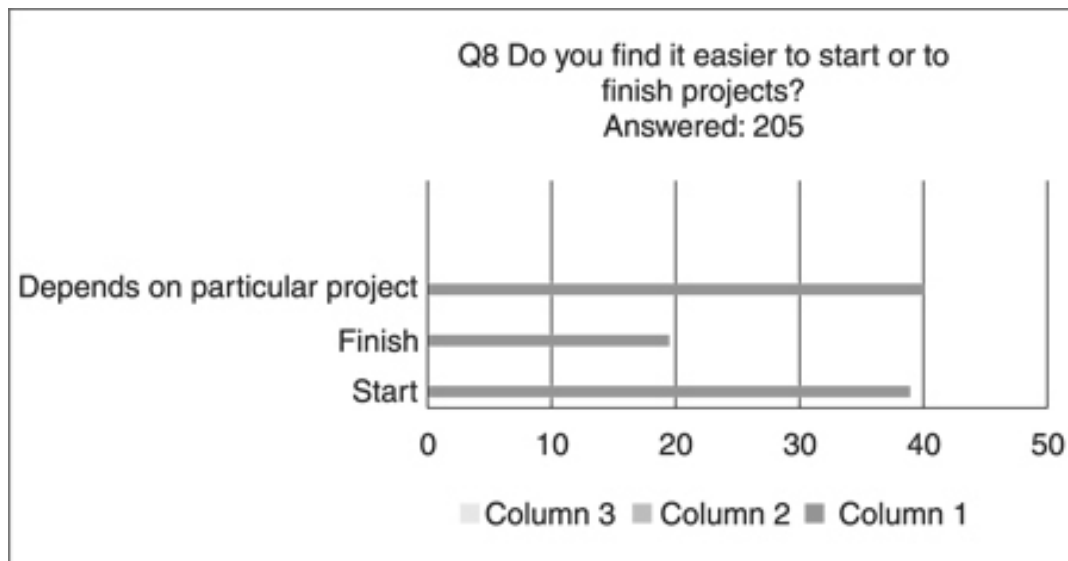
Personal

- “Paying off my daughter’s fees at school”
- “Spending more time with my grandson”
- “Losing weight”
- “Emptying my house of useless stuff ”
- “Getting married”

If you find it easier to start rather than finish a project, you are not alone there either. Of the 205 men and women that I queried about that preference, 39 percent wrote that it is easier to start a project; only 19.51 percent wrote that it is easier to finish. When I separated out the 49 respondents from India and the 105 from throughout the United States, the answers were quite consistent: Forty percent of the Americans versus 36.7 percent of the Indians noted that starting is easier than finishing.

There was a third possible answer and that answer received about the same number who wrote that starting is easier than finishing; forty percent (40%) from both countries wrote that it depends on the project. So, for almost half of those who responded to my survey, the challenge relates to a specific task rather

than a more global problem with finishing although, as we have seen, for 39% finishing *is* difficult.



Starting

Although most people in my survey had the most trouble with finishing a project, or, alternatively, it depended on the project, a minority of nearly 20 percent find starting the most challenging.

It's a no brainer that you can't finish a project unless you start, so let's address those occasions when getting started is tougher for you.

I am personally faced with that situation right now. In this case, it's doing the final rewrite on a book I've been working on for a decade. When I initially finished it two years ago, I had been working on it, nonstop, for several months. I had a momentum. But when I stopped and put the book aside, I lost that momentum. It has truly been challenging to get back to the project and finalize it. So, in this case, it is a problem with restarting a project.

So, let's address both situations. Starting and restarting.

If you are having a hard time starting a project or a task:

1. Remind yourself that only by starting will you be able to finish.
2. Is there something you really want to do after you finish this project? Only by starting it, and completing it, can you go on to the next challenge.
3. Try the “just a little” approach. Tell yourself, “If I just spend 10 minutes on this project, I can do something else.” Most of the time, if you let yourself spend just 10 minutes, you will get “into” the project or task and 10 minutes will become an hour or however long it takes to make progress on this task or project.
4. Delegate. Maybe you are reluctant to start a project because you should not be doing it in the first place. It is not making the most of your best skills or you are not the right person for the job. You just might be better off passing along the task to someone else.
5. Review all the behaviors and attitudes that you will learn about as possible reasons for failing to finish something and apply it to starting instead. That includes fear of success, fear of failure, procrastination, perfectionism, etc.

The goal of *How to Finish Everything You Start* is to explore the causes, and the possible cures, for the failure to finish syndrome and then empower you to get better at finishing every task or project that you decide you want to finish.

In Chapter 2, we will explore the 22 beliefs, behaviors, and bad habits that are obstacles to finishing.

In Part 3 of this book, we will also discuss making the judgment calls about what you should be working on in the first place. Here we’ll explore how failing to finish something might be a test, that there may be a valid reason behind this incompleteness, a reason that needs to be assessed, and addressed, before finishing, to make sure finishing is the best course of action.

How to Finish Everything You Start teaches you how to complete more tasks and projects than ever before, empowering you to get more done. By reducing or eliminating the pile of unfinished tasks or endeavors, and all the feelings of self-doubt, lowered self-esteem and self-loathing that too often accompany having unfinished projects, you will become more productive. That will lead to greater success and happiness.

One of the reasons I wrote this book is because I sometimes battle with this issue. It happened again with this book, which I had put off finishing. Once I conducted the final survey and put working on the book into my calendar, making my commitment to the project concrete, to my amazement, the words just flowed.

How to Finish Everything You Start is my seventh time management book starting with *Creative Time Management* , published in 1984 by Prentice Hall and, most recently, *Put More Time on Your Side* , 2nd edition, published in the U.S. and Canada by Sound Wisdom, with foreign rights handled by my small press, Hannacroix Creek Books, Inc.

Six of those books were dedicated to the basic principles of time management including a training manual on teaching time management to IT professionals, *Delivering Time Management to IT Professionals* , published by Packt of Birmingham, England.

Two books are hybrid time management books in that each one applies time management to a specific challenge: finding a romantic partner (*125 Ways to Meet the Love of Your Life*) and the weight challenge (*The Fast Track Guide to Losing Weight and Keeping it Off*). One or more of my time management books have been translated into 15 languages including Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Indonesian, simplified and complex Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Slovenian, Croatian, Marathi, Bulgarian, Vietnamese, Russian, and Thai, with Tamil and Hindi translations in preparation.

How to Use This Book

You could read the book straight through and then go back and do the exercises at the end of each chapter or you could read the book one chapter at a time, doing the exercises as you go along. If you prefer, you could also skip the exercises, but you may get more out of it if you make the time to do the accompanying exercises.

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Consequences of Failing to Finish

Here are a few national and international consequences related to the failing to finish epidemic.

- In the United States, nearly 600,000 high school students drop out annually instead of finishing their degree.
- Almost 50 percent—nearly half—of all American college students will drop out without an undergraduate degree.
- In Venezuela, Mexico, and Chile, only 19 percent of students finished college in 2015.
- Ph.D. candidates drop out at alarming rates becoming what is known as an ABD—All but Dissertation. (According to Rebecca Schuman, in her article, “ABD Company,” that the 10-year completion rate ranges from 49 percent in the humanities to 56 percent in the social