



Money Mindset: Future Homer's Problem

By John Curry

There's an old *The Simpsons* episode called "MoneyBart," in which Marge confronts Homer about shirking his responsibilities again. Instead of reflecting or changing course, Homer shrugs off the warning with a now-classic line: "That's a problem for Future Homer. Man, I don't envy that guy."

It's absurd but painfully familiar. We all do it: the medical appointment, overdue insurance review, or difficult family conversation that keeps sliding to the next month.

Procrastination doesn't usually show up as outright defiance. Instead, it's quiet, polite, sometimes sneaky, and incredibly persistent.

The trouble is, while it may feel like a minor delay in the moment, procrastination has a compounding effect, especially when it comes to the big decisions that shape our financial lives.

Slipping Away

For high-net-worth individuals navigating retirement or other life transitions, procrastination rarely looks like Homer-level neglect. Instead, it shows up as indecision—open browser tabs, half-finished forms, or vague intentions to circle back.

But it can quietly shape outcomes in ways that become more difficult to reverse with time.



Delaying retirement savings early in life is one of the most measurable examples. Starting retirement contributions at age 25 vs. 35 can mean a difference of hundreds of thousands of dollars by age 65, even with the same total contributions, purely due to the extra decade of compounding.

This logic applies later in life as well, particularly when you postpone reallocating portfolios to align with new goals or delay planning for your retirement paycheck.

Putting off insurance decisions—life, disability, or long-term care—can result in higher premiums or limited options later, especially if a health condition arises.

“If you’re working, you need disability insurance,” says CAPTRUST Financial Advisor [Megan Loftin](#) in Raleigh, North Carolina. “Most people will have coverage through work, but it may not be sufficient for their needs. You don’t want to wait until you need it to find out if you have enough coverage.” Many employer-provided plans cover only 60 percent of base salary, which often isn’t enough for high earners.

Conversations about legacy are often emotionally charged, and therefore easy to postpone. Failure to act, whether that means updating wills, clarifying beneficiary designations, or having conversations with heirs, can leave a legacy of confusion instead of support.

“I have clients who needed estate documents,” says Loftin. “If something happened to either of them, it had the potential to become messy. Creating their documents was something they intended to do, but finding out that one of them needed major surgery is what finally got everything in motion.”

It’s not just about cost. It’s about peace of mind for yourself, and for those who may one day need to step in on your behalf.

None of these delays are unusual. But each carries more weight the longer it stays unresolved. To understand why these delays happen, it’s helpful to look at how people actually make decisions.

Time Is on My Side



Procrastination is not a character flaw. In fact, it's often strongest in high-functioning people who are juggling complexity, managing other people's expectations, and staying busy with what's urgent.

"Home maintenance is a big area of procrastination for me," says Loftin. "We've had a basketball hoop in our garage for a year, just waiting to be hung. I'd love to find a handyman and give them a list of things that need to be done—but I guess I've also procrastinated on finding that person."

Beneath the surface, a few well-studied behavioral patterns help explain why even capable, well-resourced individuals put off important decisions.

Present bias, also known as hyperbolic discounting, pulls us toward immediate comfort and away from long-term benefits. The discomfort of sitting down to review a life insurance policy or initiate an estate planning conversation outweighs the distant satisfaction of having it done.

Then comes the planning fallacy, our tendency to underestimate how long tasks will take. We tell ourselves we'll get to it next weekend, after the year ends, or when things settle down. We assume each task will be quick and straightforward, despite past evidence to the contrary.



Last, add in optimism bias, which is when we assume that when we finally do act, everything will go smoothly. No curveballs, no complications. It's a hopeful illusion, one that often keeps us from starting at all.

Emotional Rescue

But cognitive bias isn't the whole story. Our emotions shape our decisions just as powerfully as our reasoning.

Sometimes we avoid decisions not because we don't care, but because the task feels emotionally heavy, abstract, or wide open. This is called task aversion, and it's especially common with decisions that affect our family, identity, or future.

"The most important decisions can be the hardest to make," says Loftin. "Fear, anxiety, and apprehension can all combine to basically paralyze someone trying to make an important decision."

And finally, there's energy. Mental fatigue can reduce our capacity for self-control and decision-making. When we're depleted after a long day, a tough meeting, or just too much noise we default to what feels easiest in the moment: nothing.

Start Me Up

The opposite of procrastination isn't hustle. It's clarity. The more clearly we see the task and the more compassionately we relate to the part of ourselves that's avoiding it, the easier it becomes to move.

Here are a few ways to bring mindfulness and momentum into the process.

- **Shrink the task.** You don't have to fix your entire estate plan in one day. You just have to send the email or book the meeting that gets the ball rolling. As productivity expert David Allen notes, most people don't procrastinate on doing—they procrastinate on deciding what the next step is. Loftin agrees: "Breaking down a big decision into smaller decisions can help create forward momentum."
- **Make a list.** Vague, open-ended tasks create mental friction. To start moving, write down one or two actual next steps. Create due dates for yourself, and include relevant information like phone numbers and names of whom to contact. This will help ensure that when you have the mental capacity to focus on the task, you also have what you need to complete it.
- **Time your energy.** It's not only about when you're free. It's about when you have mental bandwidth. Financial decisions often require emotional clarity and executive function. This is why reviewing your estate plan after a stressful workday rarely goes well. Schedule it for Tuesday morning instead.
- **Build in a buffer.** The planning fallacy is real. Get started when you can, not when things become urgent. Give yourself more time than you think you'll need. This adds breathing room, which reduces resistance.



- **Create accountability.** You don't have to go it alone. Share your intention with a trusted advisor, spouse, partner, or friend. A little accountability can help you break the cycle of delay.

None of these ideas are about working harder. They're about working with the grain of human behavior, instead of against it. The goal isn't to beat procrastination; it's to move gently, deliberately, and often.

Break the Spell

Procrastination lives in the gap between intention and action. You don't have to bridge that entire gap today. You just have to take the first step. Usually, it starts with a little self-honesty.

Really think about why you're delaying whatever it is," says Loftin. "Is it an uncomfortable conversation, something you don't feel educated on, or are you trying to do too many things at once?"

Don't look at the whole plan all at once. Just pick the one thing you've been avoiding. Maybe it's emailing your advisor for a policy review, opening that estate planning folder, or scheduling a quick 20-minute check-in. Choose one thing, and do it this week.

Don't leave it for Future You. Take one clear step today—even Future Homer would approve.

About the Author

CAPTRUST's former chief marketing officer, John Curry is now constructing his own Second Act and adjusting to unretirement in Spain. In the finance industry since 1986, Curry was instrumental in the launch of *VESTED* magazine, serving as its original editor in chief.

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