

*A BEHAVIORAL DESIGNER'S WORKBOOK*

# HOW TO KEEP HYPERBOLIC DISCOUNTING FROM KILLING YOUR PRODUCTIVITY

*Nir&Far*

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# COME CLEAN

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Let's face it. It's hard to recall a week during which we haven't put off some major task or an important deadline, whether at work or at home. Your boss is breathing down your neck, the pressure is on — all signs are pointing to you getting it done. Yet you put it off, turn on Netflix, and fantasize about how you're going to crush it tomorrow. We've all been there.

Before we dive in, it's time to come clean. So tell us...what important project, deadline, or task would you like to address.?



*What have  
you been  
putting off?*

Write down big task or project that you've been putting off here:

# MY EXCUSES

Why are you putting this off? (check all that apply)

☐ It's a waste of time.

☐ I don't know where to begin.

☐ It's too difficult.

☐ It's boring.

☐ I'm worried that I won't do it well.

☐ It's not urgent.

☐ I need to do \_\_\_\_\_ first.

☐ If I finish this now and do a decent job at it, this will likely lead to more work ahead.

☐ I'm exhausted.

**I'm  
waiting  
on  
someone  
else.**

*Add other excuses (in case  
we missed something).*

**Someone else  
will do it  
eventually.**

**I work best  
under pressure.**

**I need  
more  
info to  
get  
started.**

*Add other excuses (in case we missed something).*

How will you feel once you've finished your task?

# WHY AM I THIS WAY?



You've fallen victim to hyperbolic discounting.

*Nir's Note: This workbook contains excerpts from an article on NirandFar.com written and illustrated by Lakshmi Mani, a product designer working in San Francisco.*

Many important decisions concerning our health, wellness, finances, and careers are affected by hyperbolic discounting. Hyperbolic discounting is a cognitive bias, where people choose smaller, immediate rewards rather than larger, later rewards.

Cognitive biases are mental shortcuts we use, which generally help us make quick decisions, but don't always work out for the best.

# SO...AM I SCREWED?

How does this relate to getting your important projects done today? When you procrastinate, you opt for the instant gratification of enjoying yourself now rather than the future reward of accomplishing the things you set out to do.

Our motivation tends to be highly dependent on how imminent the reward is perceived to be. Because your perception is susceptible to present bias, you tend to care very little about rewards that are not immediate.

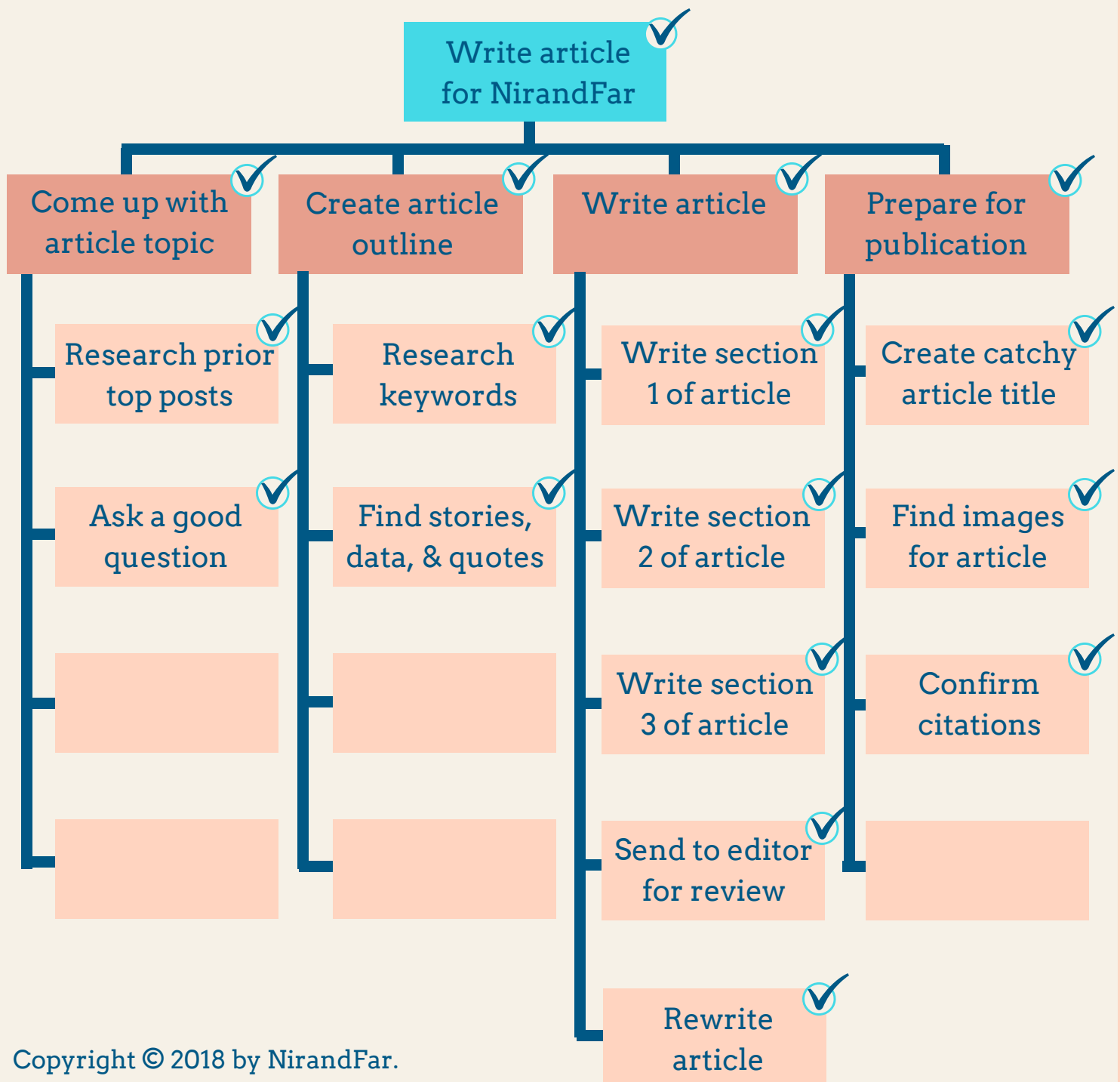
Combat hyperbolic discounting head-on by breaking up your big, important tasks into smaller, manageable chunks. Tackling this revised list will feel a lot less intimidating and you'll get a shot of satisfaction from completing a task sooner.



So let's give that a try, shall we?

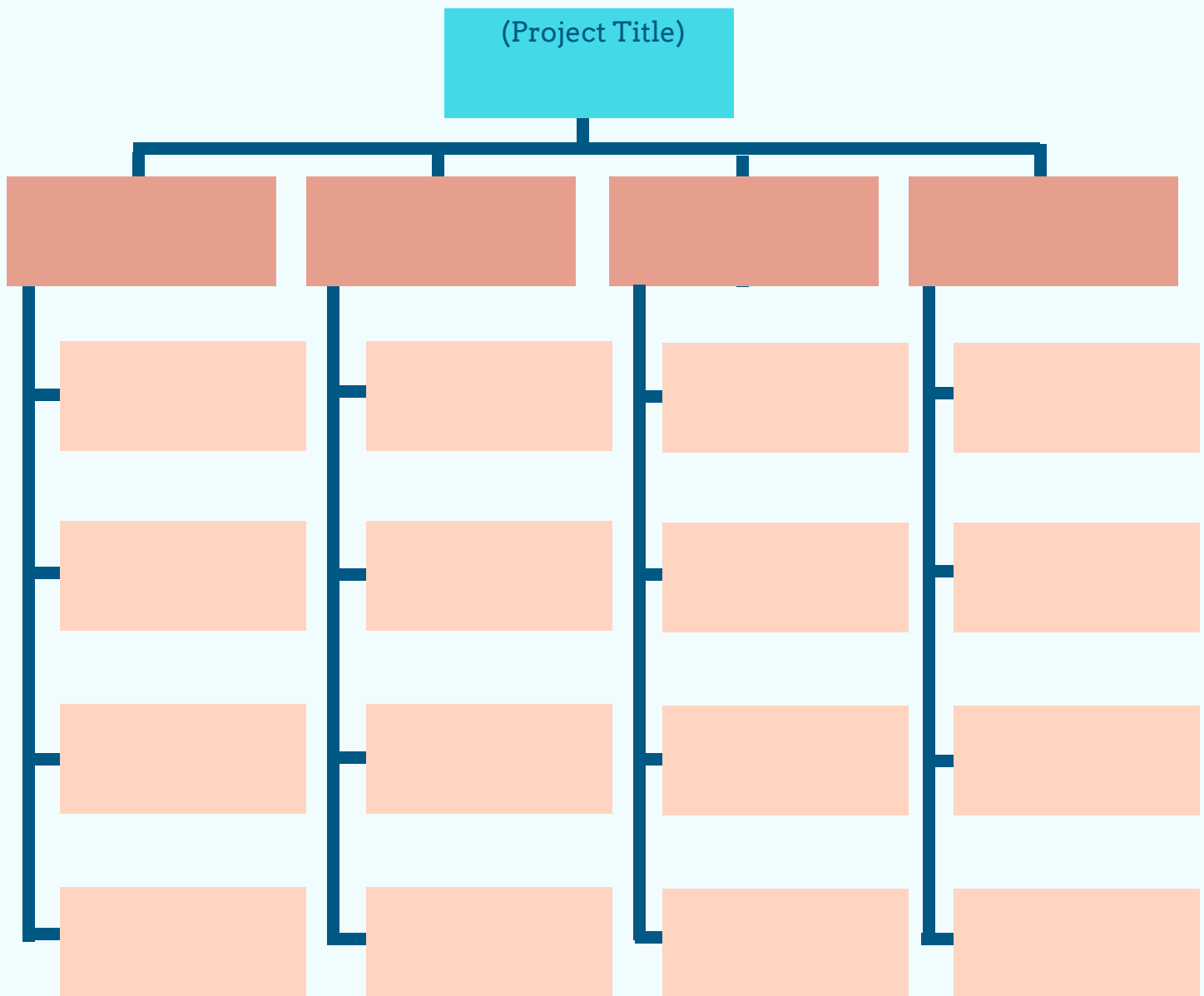
# BREAK IT DOWN

You'll need smaller, more immediate wins to get you started on your bigger project. Here's an example of my big task of writing a new article for NirandFar.com.



# YOUR TURN

Let's break up your big hairy project into smaller, bite-sized tasks. Don't forget to celebrate your wins along the way!



# RESOURCES

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Looking for additional resources to combat procrastination and manage distractions?

- An introduction to hyperbolic discounting:  
<https://goo.gl/D83qgM>
- Resources to overcome digital distraction:  
<https://goo.gl/Jgcf6j>
- How to become Indistractable:  
<https://goo.gl/6PdTWB>



Hi, I'm Nir.

I write about the intersection of psychology, technology, and business. I call it "Behavioral Design." The topic encompasses user experience, behavioral economics, and a dash of neuroscience.

I write to help companies create behaviors that benefit their customers while educating individuals on how to design healthy behaviors in their own lives.

Feel free to read more about me [here](#). You can also check out my best-selling book, *Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products*.