

PRAESTA PROMPT: WHAT ARE WE AVOIDING?

Are you an expert in finding ingenious ways to avoid difficult issues? Deliberately pausing to think a problem through and to check the quality of the supporting evidence helps bring perspective. But there comes a moment when the nettle must be grasped.

Facing into an issue can take courage when we imagine all the things that could go wrong, or the resistance we may meet. **The key question then is: “What could be the consequences of not acting? Might they be worse?”**

We encourage leaders to:

- name the top three issues they keep putting on one side
- reflect on the reasons why some important matters never get above the line in the 'to do' list
- question whether those reasons stand up to scrutiny
- explore their emotional reactions and what may lie behind them
- recall how they have faced into difficult conversations in the past

Leaders have found it helpful to:

- seek the perspective of trusted colleagues about what they appear to be avoiding
- deliberately set aside a time and location when they focus on issues they have been avoiding
- reward themselves when they begin to make progress with a difficult issue, by doing something they enjoy as a counterbalance
- recognise they are not alone in their hesitations and that beating themselves up doesn't help anyone

It can often help to ask yourself what the holder of this role should be saying and doing – or what an admired leader with a different style might do? How would they recognise the difference between judicious delay and unhelpful avoidance? How would they balance the different voices in their head?

The theme of our Praesta Prompts this autumn is **managing the chatter in our heads**. You can access the previous three Prompts in this series if you [click here](#).