

PROCRASTINATION; A THIEF OF TIME: CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

BY

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Procrastination is a complex psychological behaviour that affects everyone to some degree or another. With some it can be a minor problem; with others it is a source of considerable stress and anxiety. Procrastination is only remotely related to time management, (procrastinators often know exactly what they should be doing, even if they cannot do it), which is why very detailed schedules usually are of no help.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PROCRASTINATION

The procrastinator is often remarkably optimistic about his ability to complete a task on a tight deadline; this is usually accompanied by expressions of reassurance that everything is under control (Therefore, there is no need to start).

1. **LOW SELF-CONFIDENCE:** The procrastinator may struggle with feelings of low self-confidence and low self-esteem. He may insist upon a high level of performance even though he may feel inadequate or incapable of actually achieving that level.
2. **I'M TOO BUSY:** Procrastination may be used to call attention to how busy he is "Obviously, I cannot do such and such because my affairs are so complicated and so demanding. That is why I am late, etc. "the procrastinator may even spend considerable time justifying his reasons; time that could be spent doing the work".
3. **STUBBORNNESS:** Procrastination may be used as an expression of stubbornness or pride: "Don't think you can push me around, I will do it when I'm good and ready".

4. **MANIPULATION:** Procrastination may be used to control or manipulate the behaviour of others. “They cannot start if I am not there”. Let’s face it: deliberate delay drives others crazy.
5. **COPING WITH PRESSURES:** Procrastination is often truly difficult to eradicate since the delay behaviour has become a method of coping with day-to-day pressures and experiences. Obviously, if one is cured, others will put new demands and expectations upon you. It’s easier to have an excuse, to delay, to pull off.
6. **A FRUSTRATED VICTIM:** The Procrastinator often feels like a victim: he cannot understand his behaviour or why he cannot get work done like others. The whole thing is a frustrating mystery. The reasons for his behaviour are hidden from him.

REASON FOR PROCRASTINATION

There are two types of reasons for procrastination: **SIMPLE** and **COMPLEX** reasons:

- **SIMPLE REASONS:** There are four simple reasons for procrastination and they are:

1. **DIFFICULT:** The task seems hard to do; we naturally tend to avoid difficult things in favour of those which seem easy to us.
2. **TIME-CONSUMING:** The task will take large blocks of time, and large blocks of time until the weekend.
3. **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OR SKILLS:** No one wants to make mistakes, so wait until you learn how before you start.
4. **FEARS:** Everyone will know how you screwed up.

- **COMPLEX REASONS:** There are also four complex reasons for procrastination and they are:

1. **PERFECTIONISM:** Unrealistically high expectations or standards. Everything must go completely right. It may be either imposed or self-imposed. The perfectionist is long on criticism and short on praise.
2. **ANGER/HOSTILITY:** If we are happy with someone, we'll often withhold our best efforts. For example, if you are upset with a professor, you are likely to delay in starting a demanding project as a way of "getting even". But you are the one who loses; you are the one with the low grade. How to resolve: Determine that you are the one who is feeling upset and see how your actions will actually harm you in the long run. You are not going to let how you feel about a particular class stand in the way of your personal future, are you?
3. **LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE:** Circumstances overwhelm you easily; you find situations radically intolerable and terribly unfair. Frustration is characterized by whining and complaining, and such phrases as "it isn't fair", "this is too hard", and "no one else has to", etc. Feeling the way you do, it seems reasonable to "put it off" until you feel better about doing this work. The trouble is, you feel just as frustrated the next day.
4. **SELF-DOWNING:** This happens when you continually minimize your own skills and abilities and express doubt about your ability to succeed.

TYPES OF PROCRASTINATION

There are two types of procrastination that are particularly common and they are behavioural and decisional procrastination.

1. BEHAVIOURAL PROCRASTINATION

Behavioural Procrastination is a self-sabotage strategy that allows people to shift blame and avoid action, for example: a student may do poorly in an exam and use procrastination as an

excuse. “They’d rather create the impression that they lacked effort than ability”, “They can blame their failure on the lack of time”.

2. DECISIONAL PROCRASTINATION

The decisional procrastination strategy is to put off making a decision when dealing with conflicts or choices. People who practice high level decisional procrastination tend to be afraid of errors and are likely to be perfectionists. These procrastinators seek out more and more information about alternatives before attempting to make a decision, if they make one at all.

WHY DO STUDENTS PROCRASTINATE?

Students often procrastinate because they don’t see how a project is relevant or important to them, don’t understand the material, or just don’t know how to get started. When you boil it down, procrastination is a combination of motivation, confidence, and comprehensive issues.

CAUSES OF PROCRASTINATION AMONG STUDENTS

- Lack of motivation
- Low self-confidence
- Fear of failure
- Lack of understanding
- Trouble concentrating
- Perfectionism
- Low energy levels
- Poor organization skills

EFFECTS OF PROCRASTINATION ON STUDENTS & SCHOOLWORK

Procrastination can have a negative effect on students’ schoolwork, grades, and even their overall health.

1. Students who procrastinate experience higher levels of frustration, guilt, stress, and anxiety – in some cases leading to serious issues like low self-esteem and depression.
2. Students who procrastinate until the last minute tend to receive lower grades than their peers. This can create a cycle of bad grades and low self-confidence that can be difficult for students to overcome.

HOW CAN STUDENTS LEARN TO AVOID PROCRASTINATING?

Students can stop procrastinating and start being more productive by the following factors:

1. **BREAK THE PROJECT INTO SMALLER TASKS:**

Big projects can be overwhelming at the outset. Help your child break the project down into manageable parts such as research, writing, and editing. Then, he or she can tackle each task step by step until the project is done. This will also help your child develop and practice his or her project planning and time management skills.

2. **MAKE THE PROJECT MEANINGFUL TO HIM OR HER:**

Findings ways to make a project meaningful and relevant for students helps them connect it to their interests and gives them motivation to get started. Relate the project to something your child is interested in or a real-world scenario; this can help make homework and assignments less like work and a bit more interesting.

3. **BUILD UP YOUR CHILD’S CONFIDENCE:**

Some children procrastinate because they are afraid to fail or think they can’t live up to expectations. Boosting your child’s confidence by pointing out his or her efforts and past achievements can help your child develop a more positive attitude toward his or her work, making it easier to get started.

4. **CREATE A DEDICATED STUDY SPACE**

Without a proper study space, children can become distracted by everything going on around them something that can quickly lead to a procrastination situation. To avoid this, create a dedicated quiet space where your child can sit down and do his or her work each day. Make sure this space has all the materials your child will need, including pencils and erasers.

5. EAT HEALTHY AND GET LOTS OF SLEEP

Healthy eating and sleeping habits can help increase the amount of energy your child has as well as his or her brainpower and focus things your child needs to perform his or her best in school. Get your child into a regular sleep routine, sticking to a set bedtime each night. Help your child pack his or her lunch each day, picking healthy options like fruits and yogurt as midday snacks (these work great as after school study snacks, too!).

6. SET CLEAR GOALS

Fear of failure and perfectionism are major causes of procrastination, and can be difficult for many students to get over. Helping your child set clear and realistic goals will help him or her manages expectation and tracks his or her progress. Let your child know that sometimes it is okay to fail, and treat it as a lesson for next time.

7. MAKE A PROJECT PLAN AND STICK TO IT

Create a schedule with your child, setting dedicated blocks of “homework time” he or she uses to work on schoolwork each day. When bigger projects are assigned, sit down with your child as early as possible and make a **project plan of attack** he or she follow. Set mini project due dates or milestones your child can aim for. This will help breakdown the assignment, making big projects seem more manageable.

8. DEVELOP GOOD STUDY SKILLS

Help your child improve his or her study skills by focusing on the learning process-not just his or her grades. Getting a good grade is the goal, but it is good study skills that will help your child achieve it. Encourage active thinking and critical problem-solving skills by talking through any challenges your child is facing with their homework or assignments and working out a solution together.

HOW TO OVERCOME PROCRASTINATION

1. Realize you are delaying something unnecessarily.
2. Discover the real reasons for your delay. List them.
3. Dispute those real reasons and overcome them. Be vigorous.
4. Begin the task. Tell yourself: this isn't so hard, it won't take long, and I am sure that I know how to do it, and no one else really cares because they are all so busy with their own problems.
5. Make the tasks look small and easy in your mind. ("I've written lots of excellent papers; this is just one more paper").
6. Do only a small part of the task each time. ("I'll just check out the books tonight. Later on, I'll glance through them").
7. Five-minute plan: Work on something for just five minutes. At the end of five minutes, switch to something else if you want. Chances are, you'll get involved enough to keep going.
8. Advertise your plans to accomplish something, and let peer pressure push forward. ("I told everyone that I was going to finish this tonight).
9. Use a good friend as a positive role model. If you have trouble concentrating, study in the presence of someone who doesn't.

10. Modify your environment: if you can't study at home, find a place where you can study; or change your study situation at home.
11. Plan tomorrow and establish priorities: some students find that simply writing down reasonable starting and stopping times help them get going.
12. Expect some backsliding: don't expect to be perfect even when you're trying to get rid of perfectionism! So occasionally, your plans will not work. Accept setbacks and start again.

BENEFITS OF OVERCOMING PROCRASTINATION

What are the benefits of overcoming procrastination?

Peace of mind, a feeling of strength and purpose, and healthy feeling of being in charge of your life. While procrastination makes you feel weak, useless, and helpless, taking charge of your life will make you feel strong, competent, and capable. You will experience increased personal freedom!

CONCLUSION

The proverb '**procrastination is the thief of time**' means that:

- A person who procrastinates or delays in doing things at the right moment ultimately finds himself in a situation when he had a very little time to complete the task.
- A person who fails to discharge his duties on time fails to achieve success in life.

The secret of success in life lies in being punctual. A person has limited time to achieve success, and he has to do many things within the short span of life.

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