

The Procrastination Eliminator

Procrastination

Benjamin Franklin once said: "Never leave that till tomorrow which you can do today." This disease of delay has overtaken and overwhelmed even the most successful individuals. We've all been plagued by procrastination at one time or another. For some, it's a chronic problem. Others find that it hits only some areas of their lives. The net results, though, are usually the same—wasted time, missed opportunities, poor performance, self-deprecation, and increased stress.

Procrastination is letting the low-priority tasks get in the way of high-priority ones. It's socializing when you know that important work is due tomorrow, watching TV instead of working towards your goals, or talking about superficial things with your study group rather than discussing the task at hand.

Why individuals procrastinate: like any bad habit, there are causes.

1. They think that no matter what, regardless, they will fail if they try. Those who "know for a fact" that they are incompetent often believe they will fail, thus they decide to avoid the unpleasantness of having their skills put to the test. They fail to act decisively.
2. They feel that if they don't try, they won't have to feel like they truly failed. Everybody has heard this before: "I hardly studied, so that D is pretty good in all consideration." This attitude is a way of avoiding responsibility, and causes you to not act in "Full Effect," to not act with maximum effort.
3. They have ineffective behavioral patterns. Getting started on an unpleasant or difficult task may seem impossible for some. Procrastination is likened to the physics concept of inertia —mass at rest tends to stay at rest. Great force is required to start change, but once change begins, momentum kicks in, and change becomes easily sustainable.
4. Somehow, however silly it is, individuals believe that the alternative activity they waste their time doing, rather than doing what they should be doing, will be more pleasurable. They fail to realize, that in the long run, instant gratification and simple pleasures fail to equal the success and great feeling that effective action creates.

INDECISIVE ACTION

You'll always have plenty of energy to do the things you really want to do, and enjoy doing, whether that be partying, athletics, or studying. That's human nature—you may feel stuffed after dinner, but when the scent of dessert fills the air, you suddenly have room for more. In the same sense, when you perceive tasks as difficult, inconvenient, or scary, you may shift into procrastination mode.

Imagine yourself on a typical frigid Thursday in January. You wake up at 7:00 a.m. to catch that bus and make it to your 9:00 a.m. class: two hours of lecture, and then you hustle to make it to your 11:30 a.m. class: two hours of note-taking, and you then burst out the door to catch that same bus home again. *unclear You just miss it, and find yourself slowly, lethargically walking the hour and a half home, after failing to get a hold of your parents/friends on that payphone to pick you up. You're cold, tired, and arrive home starving. You quickly wolf down a meal, and head back to school for that study group you committed to do.

It was a long and hard day. You finally arrive home at 7:30 p.m., exhausted, and weary. You just then realize that you have a term test the next morning, and it's going to take you six solid hours to get through the three chapters covered. "Oh my god," you think to yourself, "I can barely put one foot in front of the other, let alone cram for that test." You've been up since 7:00 a.m., it's been a long hard day, and you just don't have the energy or desire to do it.

Just than the phone rings, it's your best buddy, and he/she explains: "Everyone is going out for a full-blown, killer night at the clubs; we're talking hours of dancing, partying and fun. We're leaving in twenty minutes.

Can you make it?" Your reaction ... "Can I! I'll be at your place in ten minutes!"

Here is The Secret: if you commit to doing the things you have to do, when you ought to do them, the day will come when you can do the things you want to do, when you want to do them.

Motivating yourself to pay that price, making the occasional painful sacrifice, will result in the self-pride and desire to continue paying that price. One day you will achieve and earn the pleasure of time, energy, and success; then and only then will you truly be able to do the things you want to do, when you want to do them. *unclear How soon depends on how smart, and motivated you work now. By wasting today, you will be one day older tomorrow, with the same amount achieved—delay causes stagnation, never realization.

PROCRASTINATION ELIMINATION

To Ignite Internal Motivation, and Prompt Action

Ask Yourself These 3 Questions

1. Why am I doing this?
2. What if I don't do this?
3. What will happen if I do this later?

Once you realize why you should act, affirm to yourself—"Act now," repeating it over and over. Make a habit of saying this mantra whenever you feel yourself postponing action. Living and acting in the present is the only way you can build a future.

The Perpetual Model of Action

Improvement comes once you realize that the pleasure gained by avoiding an activity in the short run will be less than the pleasure gained when taking effective action in the short run. The continual transmission mechanism that exists between your thoughts and actions creates a perpetual pattern—effective action creates positive and pleasurable thought, and thus induces more effective thought, and results in more effective action. This perpetual pattern ultimately results in you taking great pleasure and gratification in acting effectively and decisively, leading to greater accomplishment and success.

Failing to Act in "Full Effect"

Procrastination is so closely associated with a fear of failure, that it can be said to be a direct side effect. What is the connection? For many individuals, it isn't "laziness," or the fact that they are "unmotivated," that causes them to procrastinate. It is simply because they are afraid to discover what might happen if they act in the present, and maximize their effort. What would happen if they didn't succeed—they would no longer have a blanket excuse, such as "I hardly studied."

Many students sit for hours on end in the university library with books opened in front of them. But they are not studying; rather, they are staring out the window, chatting to strangers, and generally doing nothing. No doubt these students tell themselves and others that they study for three or four hours a day. The truth is, they don't study; they put in time. They have not developed that intense desire to learn, and as a result they don't. On the other hand, I have seen students cramming for a course on the night before an examination. Their whole grade, perhaps their whole college career, depends on what they do that next morning. In three or four hours these students can sometimes learn almost the entire content of a sociology or history course. They can learn it because they want to, and because they have to in order to achieve what they desire.

High-achieving individuals, those who have tapped their inner success force, recognize that it doesn't always matter how the hole got in the boat. All that matters is that it gets fixed today so that you can get on with the fishing. In the words of Abraham Lincoln: "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."