



OVERCOMING PROCRASTINATION



Would you rather have \$100 now or \$200 in one year?

Would you rather have \$100 in one year or \$200 in two years?

What is procrastination?

Procrastination basically refers to poor impulse control, a fight between wants now and needs later. It is putting off doing something you **need** to have done for **LATER** in order to do something you **want** right **NOW**. This could include putting off making an important decision, dealing with a problem, or getting an errand, chore or school assignment done.

Tick all of the reasons you tend to procrastinate:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Task seems too overwhelming (too much to do, not enough time) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Not properly motivated/no incentive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know where or how to start |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Fear of failure/rejection (if I try really hard and it doesn't pay off that will crush me) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Perfectionism (I won't do it if can't do it to my high standards) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Believing tasks can wait |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Lack of confidence (avoid doing something we don't feel confident about) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Difficulty prioritizing and managing time |

We may rationalize that something can wait and we'll get it done later and depending on the task this may be true. For example, "I just got free tickets to the Canucks game tonight! Project's not due for a couple more days, I can finish it up tomorrow instead of going to the movies". At times things may be able to wait but generally procrastinating is problematic so flip the page...

STEPS TO OVERCOME PROCRASTINATION

- 1: **Start with end goal in mind.** What do you want to achieve? How will you feel if you do?
2. **Plan a reward.** You may find your thoughts drifting off to the activities you'd prefer to be doing. Remind yourself that if you get _____ done you can be more relaxed at that concert on the weekend, the big game tomorrow, or chatting to your friends after.
3. **Remove distractions.** Attempt to remove or avoid anything that distracts you such as electronics (ie. computer, cell phone, TV, video games), people (ie. siblings, friends), noise, and tempting objects (ie. musical instrument, magazine). For example, try studying at the library, listening to music while doing chores, and logging out of social media/turning off your phone when looking for jobs online.
4. **“Prime the pump”.** Once we start a task we can usually follow through with completing it or at least working on it for a while – the tough part is getting started. Consider coming up with a phrase you can say to yourself (ie. Nike’s “Just Do It”). You can try reminding yourself of the rewards of getting it done or the consequences if you don’t.
5. **Break tasks down into smaller steps and finish 1 at a time.** For example, if you are writing an essay (a) choose a topic and come up with a thesis statement, (b) brainstorm your arguments to support thesis and come up with an outline, (c) find research you can quote/cite, (d) write a rough draft, (e) have someone proofread your draft, (f) make changes and submit final copy.
6. **Do smaller/easier things first.** Building upon breaking things into steps, if you have several things to do get the quick or easier ones done first. Focusing on a couple remaining tasks can help reduce feeling overwhelmed and decrease the likelihood of avoiding what you need to do.
7. **Take breaks.** If you’ve been working at something for a while and feel yourself drifting away go get a snack or drink, walk around the block, play with a pet, make a quick phone call etc and then get back to business. Limit breaks to 10 minutes per hour and avoid video games, TV or email as you might have trouble getting back to the task.
8. **Prioritize tasks and manage your time.** Keep track of events and personal deadlines by using dayplanners, sticky notes, dry erase calendars, email and electronic calendar reminders etc.

****IF YOU’RE STILL STRUGGLING, IT’S TIME TO GET CREATIVE****

Request extensions on deadlines, get help from friends and family, delegate tasks to others, trade a chore day with a sibling, sacrifice something unnecessary from your day etc.

