

Overcoming Procrastination

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Does this sound familiar? You have plans and ideas for getting some writing done on the report due tomorrow. You sit down at your desk but notice there are a few piles of paper surrounding your desk. So you take a few minutes to go through them. Now, you're ready to write. Oh, wait –you need to put dishes in the dishwasher. That won't take long. While you're in the kitchen you might as well grab a snack. Now you can begin writing. Maybe you'll just check your email and see what's going on with Facebook. Before you know it the entire day has gone.

Mark Twain captured the essence of procrastination with his famous quote: "Never put off until tomorrow... what you can do the day after tomorrow."

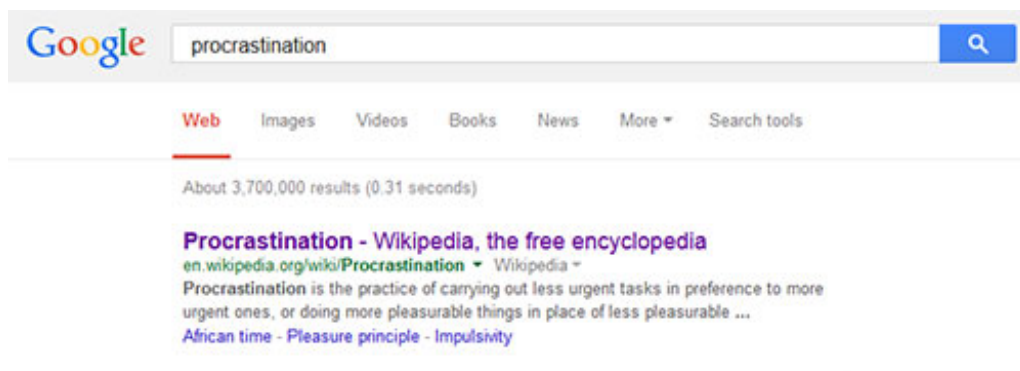
There are a lot of people who live by this adage almost religiously. And when we see that the results of this are less than what we like, we decide to stop procrastinating, beginning tomorrow.

This is a typical of procrastination. There are many reasons why we procrastinate: poor organizational skills, lack of self-esteem, a fear of failing or even succeeding. In this report we'll take a look at what causes procrastination and strategies for overcoming it.

What causes procrastination?

There are many root causes for procrastination. The specific cause often varies from person to person. These causes are often related to each other and must be addressed before you can deal with them.

According to Wikipedia, procrastination is the practice of carrying out less urgent tasks in preference to the more urgent ones. It's often when you do the more pleasurable tasks before the unpleasant ones or putting off tasks for a later time. But what causes us to procrastinate?



Do you remember this song from *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*?

Charlie Brown has a book report due. He sings in a panicky chant: "If I start writing now...when I'm not really rested...it could upset my thinking which is not good at all... I'll get a fresh start tomorrow...and it's not due till Wednesday...so I'll...have all of Tuesday unless...something should happen...Why does this always happen...I should be outside playing...getting fresh air and sunshine...I work best under pressure and there'll be lots of pressure if I...wait 'till tomorrow...I should start writing now but if I...start writing now when I'm not really rested...it could upset my thinking...which is not good at all."

Believe it or not, our brains are prewired to procrastinate. Science explains our internal seesaw conversation as a fight between two parts of our brain: the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex. The limbic system is the unconscious zone where pleasure occurs. The prefrontal cortex is our internal planner. When the limbic side wins, the result is to put off for tomorrow what we should be doing today.

We often procrastinate because we are perfectionists. We believe everything must be perfect before we can do certain tasks. We're afraid of doing a task badly or we are just too disorganized with our time or resources. Let's take a closer look:

1. Fear is a big reinforcement for procrastinators. They avoid acting or wait until they no longer have to deal with it. The tasks mount and the procrastinator becomes more and more depressed and resigned to their failures. Procrastination then reinforces their belief they are going to fail.

Fear of failure or of doing a task badly is difficult to overcome since it's based on emotions. We believe that if we delay doing something, maybe it will go away and we won't have to deal with it. Most often, though, it doesn't go away and then we end up failing.

Fear of failure isn't the only procrastinator. Fear of success is often far more difficult to deal with. It's an unconscious fear. Success requires change. Change can cause fear of the unknown.



2. Perfectionism is the fear of making a mistake, of disapproval or letting others down, and the fear of failing. It's a belief that other people succeed easily or an emphasis on the "I shoulds" (I should be able to do this). It's a form of irrational thinking.

Perfectionists first set unreachable goals, and then they fail to meet those goals. They constantly put pressure on themselves to achieve perfection. They are self-critical and blame themselves – which, in the end, lowers their self-esteem. Then they end up giving up on their goals or set different goals that are even harder to achieve.

3. Disorganization is one of the biggest causes of procrastination. We often aren't taught organizational skills in school. One of the biggest issues in moving from disorganization to organization is learning how to properly prioritize tasks. Procrastinators tend to tackle the easiest tasks first, even if they aren't the most urgent. This allows the difficult or urgent tasks to pile up. Eventually they have to be dealt with.

Procrastinators believe that every new task or opportunity needs to be dealt with first before going back to the original task. Procrastinators suffer from the belief they have better memories than they actually do. We believe we can remember important deadlines or that we will remember everything we hear. In fact, it's easy to forget things in this face-paced, multi-tasking society.

4. Our thinking patterns and beliefs can cause us to procrastinate. Often we have illogical beliefs or limited beliefs when it comes to time, our mood or how we think about a project.

We often estimate how much time it will take us to perform a task or finish a project. We think we have to be in the right mood to get started and successfully finish a project.

5. We have too many interests or ideas. This is a big one. Some of us procrastinate because we have so many ideas we don't know which one to start with. We need to just pick one and go.

6. Confusion over our goals or values. When you aren't clear about your goals and they don't align with your values, consciously or not, you are much more likely to procrastinate on reaching them.

Procrastination can be caused from different sources. It can be our own inner battle with ourselves over our self-esteem, our fear of failure, or our fear of success. Procrastination can result from lack of organizational skills or from wanting everything to be perfect. Procrastination can be harmful but there are strategies to help you overcome it.

Why procrastination is harmful

Procrastination is a bad habit that has many negative effects on your life including your job, relationships and your mental health. It can make you miss out on countless opportunities. As humans we've always tried to avoid pain. We avoid things we don't like or that bring us pain while seeking those that bring us happiness and pleasure. Procrastination is a form of this.

Sometimes by procrastinating, though, we are causing more pain.

We put off going to the doctor, wait to pay our bills, don't do our taxes until the night before they are due. These are all ways we procrastinate that could bring severe consequences to us in some way.



And yet, we still continue.

Here are some ways procrastination is harmful:

- **Lost opportunities:** Putting off work that should have been done sooner, you lose the opportunity that could get you ahead in your career or life. Consistently doing work well and building a reputation for being dependable could get you a promotion you want.
- **Your health:** Maybe you promised yourself you'd visit the gym faithfully. But there always seems to be something else to do. By procrastinating you are not taking care of your health. Mentally, your negative emotions and thoughts will cause you to sink into depression and guilt. And all the work still piled up that needs to be tackled causes your stress levels to get out of control.

- Your relationships: Procrastinators find themselves procrastinating even the simplest of tasks they have promised to do. Eventually, after countless promises from you, they end up asking someone else or do it themselves. They find you unreliable and become upset with you.
- You feel less responsible for your own actions. You don't want to take action. You make excuses when people ask you to do something. You feel self-critical and this leads to bitterness. You find people to blame for the problems you created by procrastinating.
- You rebel when people criticize you because you procrastinate. You feel victimized by others.
- You develop a false sense of perfectionism. You become critical of your own skills and ability to finish projects.
- Procrastinators lie to themselves. They convince themselves they work well under pressure and can finish all tasks in one day.
- Procrastination causes health problems such as weakened immune systems, gastrointestinal problems and sleep disorders like insomnia.



Procrastination can have many negative effects in your life. You lose sleep and your immune system begins to suffer. Your relationships take a toll and people begin to turn away from you, believing you to be unreliable. Procrastination isn't a behavior that can't be changed, though. There are strategies to help you overcome your tendency to procrastinate.

Strategies

Procrastination can cause many problems in your life, but it's not a behavior you can't change with a few helpful strategies. Procrastination in itself can be used as a way to get you out of procrastinating. In other words, use your way of putting things off to tackle each project.

Here are 14 strategies you can apply to help you get started dealing with procrastination:

1. Do the hardest and most unpleasant tasks first. Get them out of the way.
2. Break down big projects into smaller ones. Do a little bit, then move on to another section of the project. Eventually you will have the project completed.
3. Work for five minutes. Sit down and work on something for just five minutes and then move on to something else if you want or continue for another five minutes on the same task. Continue in this manner until you complete the task.



4. Make a list of all the positive things that will come from getting the task done. Also list the bad things that could and probably will happen if you continue to procrastinate about the task.
5. Look at what you actually have to do and make an assessment of what needs to be done. Then set a time limit on doing each of the tasks.
6. Learn to realize it doesn't have to be perfect. Good enough is good enough and often it's done. Of course, you want to do excellent work – it just doesn't have to be perfect.
7. Be prepared. Plan your work area. Make sure you have everything you need to do the job. Have your stamps, envelopes and checkbook all in the same area when you get ready to pay the bills. Set out all your paperwork and open the right computer files when you are ready to begin writing.
8. Ask for help. Often a project might just seem too overwhelming. Ask others to help you.
9. Reward yourself. Set up a pleasurable activity to do once your project is finished.
10. Manage your time. Use planners and diaries to organize your time. Set specific

dates and times to begin and complete your work.

11. Break the bad habit. It will take time but the habit of procrastinating can be altered.

12. Focus on finishing. Keep your end goals in mind as you work.

13. Establish your priorities. Determine what must be done first – it isn't always the easiest.

14. Change your environment. Sometimes we need to make adjustments to where we are working. If you can't work from your home office because of too many other distractions, go to the local coffee shop to work on a project.

Strategies for overcoming procrastination can be as simple as being prepared to as difficult as changing your habits. Once you begin to focus on how and why you procrastinate and begin changing the habit of doing it, you will become motivated to act on all your projects.

What to do next

Procrastination is a habit that causes us to lose out on opportunities and to fail at relationships. It can cause emotional, financial and health problems to those who constantly put things off. However, you can change this bad habit. Ask yourself what you are avoiding. With persistence and patience, you can put the tendency to procrastinate behind you.

Self Improvement Resources

[**The Allow Abundance Course**](#) - Step-by-step 26-week Course On Using The Law Of Attraction To Allow Abundance.

[**Confidence Beyond Belief**](#) - Designed To Help You Skyrocket Your Confidence Through The Roof.

[**The Forgotten Laws**](#) - Law Of Attraction Training

[**Everyday Visualization System**](#) - Visualize Your Personal Growth

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