

PROCRASTINATION

Being unable to start writing a paper or studying for an exam, or postponing it until the last moment are things that all of us complain most throughout our school life. The things we postpone usually mount up to a point that they become unmanageable.

Why do I procrastinate?

- If you are using your time ineffectively...
- If the task is irrelevant or meaningless to you...
- If the task is obligatory, assigned and out of your interest...
- If you have unrealistic and unattainable standards...
- If you overemphasize what others think...
- If you are uncertain about what is expected from you...
- If you overestimate the necessities of the task...
- If you lack the training and skills that are necessary to do the task...
...you may feel unmotivated and procrastinate...

Effective Planning

The following steps may make it easier for you to start and manage your tasks:

- Divide the task into small segments, small steps. The whole task may seem impossible; it is easier to deal with small parts.
- Distribute these small steps reasonably within the given time frame. Don't fool yourself by believing that you can do things that are impossible for a human being.
- Be aware that people need variation and relaxation with regular intervals.
- Follow your improvement regarding your small steps. Do something immediately, as you realize that a problem arises. When necessary, rearrange your time schedule.
- Don't forget to be realistic about your expectations.
- Start, instead of waiting for inspiration. Sometimes starting is the best motivation. Write a sentence, or make a "to do" list, write down your plan. Anyhow, start!!

What am I doing?

- Do you behave as if things that you ignore will disappear?
- Do you underestimate the task and overestimate your capacity and skills?
- Do you deceive yourself by thinking that a moderate, low standard would be enough?
- Do you fool yourself by replacing one task with another?
- Do you think that recurrent "minor" delays are not important?
- Do you exaggerate your commitment to task, and actually don't do it?
- Do you persevere on one point of your paper or project?
- Do you freeze when trying to decide between alternatives?

What can I do?

If you find yourself in one or more of the situations listed above, you have a tendency to avoid or procrastinate. There is a list of things you may try:

- From the list above, identify the situations that you find yourself in and write them down (Don't say "I'll do it later"!).
- See what you are postponing and what kind of excuses you use for doing it.
- Be honest about what you will do. We spend more effort on some tasks and less on others. Don't let your guilt to prevent you from accepting this reality. Blaming yourself is not a good motivation tool.
- Try telling yourself the following:
 - **"There is no better time than now."**
 - **"If I finish it quickly, I will start doing more enjoyable things earlier."**
 - **"If I want, I can."**
 - **"Doing it now is easier than doing it later."**
 - **"I did before, I can do again."**
- Be rational and realistic about your expectations. Instead of thoughts such as "This paper will no way be ready on Monday", "I can't get a good grade from this exam", you may think more realistically as "I will do my best to finish this paper", "I may not have a 90 or a 100, but I may write something anyway."
- Try to understand the requirements of completing an assigned task in a given time well, so that uncertainty will not get in your way.

- Differentiate fake responsibility (taking your books to vacation) and the activities that will really make you accomplish a task.
- Give each segment of your task just the time needed for it. Look over the whole project and visualize the steps needed to complete it.
- If you lack knowledge and skills that are necessary to accomplish a task, try to complete them first.
- Learn to say “no” to others. Don’t promise that you’ll do things that are irrelevant to you or you don’t want to do, and due to this you will never start doing.

For More Information

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