

PROCRASTINATION

Procrastination...the thief of time. A recent study¹ shows that 95% of the people are prone to procrastination, and among them 15% to 20% of them are chronic procrastinators. So what is procrastination, and why has it stolen so many peoples time?

Procrastination is the habitual and intentional act of putting off, or postponement, of tasks that you could or should do now, for a later time. It is really a form of avoidance and over time can have a severe negative impact on the person's life. Procrastination can have both external and internal consequences. It can increase, rather than reduce, stress. It can make a person physically sick by adding unnecessary pressure to oneself by delaying action. It may result in a sense of guilt, inadequacy, a loss of personal productivity, the creation of crisis and disapproval from others for not fulfilling a commitment, obligation, or responsibility. Procrastinators actually choose paths that hurt their performance and complicate their lives.

A more serious form of procrastination, though many fail to recognize it as such, is chronic lateness. This may involve being late for appointments, social engagements, business meetings, or simply being late to work. Or it may involve tardiness in getting things done on time or in meeting deadlines. It could cost one friends, a job and even, it has been said, one's marriage. So with all these disadvantages, what would cause a person to procrastinate?

It is simple for us to say that we put off doing things because we are lazy. Procrastination is a much deeper problem. It can be caused by anxiety, which is the leading cause of procrastination. A person may feel inadequate, or incompetent and lack confidence needed to get the task done; may feel bored with a task; or do a task providing immediate reward rather than long term gain. They may also have a fear of failure or a fear of success which would cause the minimization or altogether avoidance of the task at hand. Checking and answering your email or IM's frequently, can be a sign of procrastination, you may be allowing distractions to avoid completing a task. There are many reasons why people procrastinate, and each of us is affected differently. Procrastination is a bad habit, and understanding the reasons and emotions behind your procrastination, can help you to overcome it. So what steps can you take to overcome procrastination?

- Do the most important task first. Set your priorities. To overcome procrastination, you must look at the reason and the true worth of the task. In the event you feel like putting a task off, ask yourself questions as are these things really important? Do they serve a useful purpose? And if so, what is preventing me from doing them?
- Change your way of thinking. You may have heard the saying "better late than never", but what about changing it to "it's better to be early than late"
- Break a "big" task down. Break a big project into smaller projects, doing them one step at a time.
- Don't place too much pressure on yourself. Pressure can lead to procrastination.
- Think about the end result. Visualize the project completed.
- Count the cost. What if the project is not completed in time, what are the effects?
- Reward yourself. As you complete a task, congratulate yourself. Give yourself something to look forward to.

¹ according to Pies Steel, a professor at the University of Calgary's Haskayne School of Business

Keeping yourself balanced is a key ingredient if we are to be happy even though we have a lot to do. What is balance? It is “mental and emotional steadiness”. A balanced person strives to be orderly in their activities, plans ahead, avoids procrastination, and is moderate in habits. Stop procrastinating today, after all, a job completed and well done leaves an inner glow of satisfaction. Endeavor to do better, set new standards, new goals.