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ANALYSES OF PROCRASTINATION

We all are humans and have our weaknesses; one of them is procrastination.

Procrastination is a challenge we have all faced at one point or another. For as long as humans have been around, we have been struggling with delaying, avoiding, and procrastinating on issues that matter to us. This fashionable phenomenon can cause big problems, because everybody knows that everything is good in its season.

Human beings have been procrastinating for centuries. The problem is so timeless, in fact, that ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates and Aristotle developed a word to describe this type of behavior: Akrasia.

Akrasia is the state of acting against your better judgment. It is when you do one thing even though you know you should do something else. You could say that akrasia is procrastination or a lack of self-control.

Let's find out what exactly "procrastination" is. Procrastination (*Latin: procrastinare, pro-, 'forward', with -crastinus, 'till next day' from "cras", 'tomorrow'*) is defined as the avoidance of doing a task that needs to be accomplished [1]. It could be stated as a habitual/intentional delay of starting or finishing a task despite its negative consequences [2]. It is a common human experience involving delay in everyday chores or even putting off salient tasks such as attending an appointment, submitting a job report or academic assignment, or broaching a stressful issue with a partner. So, procrastination is the act of delaying or postponing a task or set of tasks.

Sounds horrible, doesn't it? But why do we procrastinate?

Behavioral psychology research has revealed a phenomenon called "time inconsistency," which helps explain why procrastination seems to pull us in despite our good intentions. Time inconsistency refers to the tendency of the human brain to value immediate rewards more highly than future rewards.

The best way to understand this is by imagining that you have two selves: your Present Self and your Future Self. When you set goals for yourself — like losing weight or writing a book or learning a language — you are actually making plans for your Future Self. Researchers have found that when you think about your Future Self, it is quite easy for your brain to see the value in taking actions with long-term benefits. The Future Self values long-term rewards.

However, while the Future Self can set goals, only the Present Self can take action. When the time comes to make a decision, you are no longer making a choice for your Future Self. Now you are in the present moment, and your brain is thinking about the Present Self. Researchers have discovered that the Present Self really likes instant gratification, not long-term payoff.

So, the Present Self and the Future Self are often at "war" with one another. The Future Self wants to be trim and fit, but the Present Self wants a donut. Sure, everyone

knows you should eat healthy today to avoid being overweight in 10 years. But consequences like an increased risk for diabetes or heart failure are years away.

This is one reason why you might go to bed feeling motivated to make a change in your life, but when you wake up you find yourself falling back into old patterns. Your brain values long-term benefits when they are in the future (tomorrow), but it values immediate gratification when it comes to the present moment (today).

You cannot rely on long-term consequences and rewards to motivate the Present Self. Instead, you have to find a way to move future rewards and punishments into the present moment. You have to make the future consequences become present consequences.

This is exactly what happens during the moment when we finally move beyond procrastination and take action. For example, I had this report to write. I'd known about it for weeks and continued to put it off day after day. I experienced a little bit of anxiety thinking about this paper, but not enough to do anything about it. Then, suddenly, the day before the deadline, the future consequences turned into present consequences, and I started writing the report hours before it is due. The pain of procrastinating finally escalated and I crossed the "Action Line."

There is something important to note here. As soon as you cross the Action Line, the pain begins to reduce. In fact, being in the middle of procrastination is often more painful than being in the middle of doing the work. The guilt, shame, and anxiety that you feel while procrastinating are usually worse than the effort and energy you have to put in while you're working. *The problem is not doing the work, it's starting the work.*

If we want to stop procrastinating, then we need to make it as easy as possible for the Present Self to get started and trust that motivation and momentum will come after we begin. *Motivation often comes after starting, not before.*

Here are the ways to stop procrastinating.

1. Take The Smallest Step Possible

When you don't feel motivated, take the smallest step possible toward your goal. After taking that step, you're more likely to continue taking more steps toward that goal. Instead of telling yourself to workout for an hour, say you'll go for 10 minutes. - Rosie Guagliardo, InnerBrilliance Coaching

2. Identify A Positive Outcome From Your Action

To overcome your tendency to procrastinate, focus on what the reward is when you take action. This assumes the outcome is something you want. Be very selective about what you let into your experience and surround yourself with to keep your energy as clean as possible to achieve the goals you want. - Christine Hueber, ChristineHueber.com

3. Give Yourself A Hard Deadline, Then Schedule It

The best way to overcome a natural tendency to procrastinate is to create a hard deadline for yourself and then put it on the calendar. Having a scheduled deadline that you commit to will make it easier to get tasks completed. Treat the deadline the same as if your boss created it, and then honor it the same way you would if your boss were waiting for you to complete the task. - Kitty Boitnott, Boitnott Coaching, LLC/Teachers in Transition

4. Be Kind To Yourself

Forgive yourself. If you have the tendency to label yourself a procrastinator, make your first effort one to drop the name calling. For whatever your past experience has been, refocus on doing 5% more toward your goal and give yourself permission to be human at the same time. - Cindy Stack, Whole-Life Leadership

5. Switch Off Your Phone And Set A Timer

Take away all that can interrupt. Making it happen is literally as easy as setting an intention and then shutting off tempting interruptions. - Laura DeCarlo, Career Directors International

6. Give Yourself A Reward For Each Task You Complete

Make a list of things you need to do and do the one you don't want to do first. Then give yourself a little reward for doing it (piece of candy, a few minutes on social media, etc). Then do something on your list that you want to do and continue alternating from there. - Krista Rizzo, Why Am I Yelling? Life Coaching

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