



Why We Procrastinate and How to Stop

Why do we procrastinate?

Believe it or not, procrastination is not a time management or productivity problem; it's all about emotions. People procrastinate as a way of coping with negative emotions, such as boredom, anxiety, insecurity, frustration, self-doubt, and other less desirable moods. We tend to procrastinate more on tasks that are difficult, uninteresting, or that make us doubt our abilities. Procrastinating on tasks that make us feel uncomfortable provides a short-term mood boost, but often leads to increased stress and anxiety, and even more procrastination!

What do I do about it?

Because of the strong emotional tie to procrastination, this problem can't be resolved fully with time management apps or self-management strategies. Instead, we have to learn to manage our emotions differently. Consider these strategies for overcoming procrastination:

- **Give Yourself a Bigger Better Offer (BBO):** Find a reward that is better than avoidance. Consider using the activities you use to procrastinate on critical tasks as a reward that you deploy only after completing your tasks.
- **Forgive Yourself:** If you forgive yourself for procrastinating on studying for your first exam, you will be more likely to study productively for future exams.
- **Practice Self-compassion:** Self-compassion has proven to decrease psychological distress, which is a primary culprit for procrastination.
- **Be Self-Aware:** Explore your feelings related to procrastination. Identify which feelings prompt you to procrastinate and address them.
- **Consider Your Next Action:** Break tasks down into small chunks and complete the task one piece at a time.
- **Reduce Temptations:** Build obstacles between yourself and your temptations. For example, if you watch Netflix when you are supposed to be doing homework, remove the Netflix app from your phone.
- **Give Yourself Credit:** While we all procrastinate, we also get things done. Take some time at the end of each day to celebrate all you have accomplished.
- **Set Deadlines:** By shortening the timeframe for completing a task, you are more likely to get started on that task. And once you get started, you are more likely to stay motivated to complete the task.

Source: Why You Procrastinate (It Has Nothing to Do With Self-Control) by Charlotte Lieberman, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/25/smarter-living/why-you-procrastinate-it-has-nothing-to-do-with-self-control.html>