

PROCRASTINATION

GETTING STARTED

Often the toughest part of doing a task (and the most procrastinated event) is getting started. Here are some tips to help you overcome procrastination when starting tasks:

Divide and Conquer

Trying to do a large task, such as writing a 20-page term paper all at once, can seem impossible. Take the time to divide up the task and tackle each part separately. Keep a positive attitude so you won't get buried while doing work.

Start with a part that is believable

When you have an "impossible" task, start with an easy part of it to get it out of the way and gain some confidence and momentum.

Make it ridiculous

Use your imagination for motivation. When trying to drudge through your task, imagine a "great" reward when you're finished (such as receiving a standing ovation from your entire organization or class, receiving a barrel full of cash, etc.).

Reward yourself BIG

When you are having a tough time sticking to a job, give yourself a reward for completing it. Maybe you get up every morning at dawn to run, so as a reward for completing your job, let yourself sleep in for an extra hour. (Remember to think BIG!)

David and Goliath it

Some tasks just can't be put off any longer and need to be worked on. As hard as it may be, dig in your heels and face "giant" tasks directly. Don't let fear hold you back! By forcing yourself to get started you can easily complete the rest of your work.

AVOIDING DISTRACTIONS

Once you start your tasks, you may be tempted by distractions to further procrastinate. Here are some techniques for dealing with distraction:

Strong emotions

This type of distraction deserves immediate attention. You may be using work to distract yourself from dealing with strong emotions regarding friends, family, relationships, etc. Rather than struggling to concentrate on your work, allow yourself some time to think through what you can do to cope with your situation. Once you have acknowledged your emotions and developed a plan for coping with them, you will be better able to concentrate on your tasks.

U.F.O.'s: Unidentified Flights of Originality

Sometimes your most creative ideas for a project will come to you while you are struggling to concentrate on another project. Write down these "U.F.O.'s" but don't let them further distract you. Because you've written them down, the ideas will not be lost, and you can use them later.

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Warnings of danger

Real or imagined threats may cause distractions (i.e., I have to finish by Friday, or else!). Try to place your fears in perspective. Think of the alternatives, even if the worst might happen. Often these dangers are not as great as you might think. By reducing the imagined threats, your stress distractions may be reduced, and you will be more focused on your tasks.

“To do” reminders

When you are in the middle of a difficult job, buying a loaf of bread or some other “to do” item might suddenly haunt you. Keep a pad of paper where you work. When you remember something you need to do, write it down and then stay focused on the task at hand. When you finish or find a break, you can then deal with your “to do” list.

By implementing some of these ideas in your life, you will be on your way to beating procrastination.