

# Overcoming Procrastination



## Introduction

William Knaus, a psychologist, estimated that 90% of college students procrastinate. Of these students, 25% are chronic procrastinators and they are usually the ones who end up dropping out of college.

## What is Procrastination?

Procrastination is the avoidance of doing a task, which needs to be accomplished. This can lead to feelings of guilt, inadequacy, depression and self-doubt among students. Procrastination has a high potential for painful consequences. It interferes with the academic and personal success of students.

## Why do Students Procrastinate?

Procrastination begins with some kind of negative feeling that distracts us. However negative is often just a label put on top of neutral energy. If you can recognize and reframe some of these feelings of anxiety and self-doubt, you can make a plan for organizing your time and yourself.

### Problem

- **Unrealistic Expectations and Perfectionism.** You may believe that you **MUST** read everything ever written on a subject before you can begin to write your paper. You may think that you haven't done the best you possibly could do, so its not good enough to hand in.
- **Fear of Failure.** You may think that if you don't get an A, you are a failure. Or that if you fail an exam, you, as a person, are a failure, rather than that you are a perfectly ok person who has failed an exam.

### Finding the Task Boring.

- **Fear and Anxiety.** You may be overwhelmed with the task and afraid of getting a failing grade. As a result, you spend a great deal of time worrying about your upcoming exams, papers and projects, rather than completing them.
- **Difficulty Concentrating.** When you sit at your desk you find yourself daydreaming, staring into space, looking at pictures of your boyfriend/girlfriend, etc., instead of doing the task.
- **Personal Problems.** For example, financial difficulties, problems with your boyfriend/girlfriend, etc.

### Solution

- Let go of those beliefs. Start early, do the best you can at the moment. Review and revise later.
- Reframe failure use it to learn; move on to the next event. Compete only with yourself! Visit the professor - how can I do better on the next exam?
- Focus on your priorities and goals. Apply material to yourself.
- Break the large task into small parts. Set specific goals. Bite it off, one small bite at a time.
- Getting started: organize environment; 5 minute rule; pre-read text; review lecture notes; use a worry pad.
- Seek counseling.

- **Poor Time Management.** Procrastination means not managing time wisely. You may be uncertain of your priorities, goals and objectives. You may also be overwhelmed with the task. As a result, you keep putting off your academic assignments for a later date, or spending a great deal of time with your friends and social activities, or worrying about your upcoming examination, class project and papers rather than completing them.
- Keep a record of how you are using your time.
- Summarize your time usage by categories.
- Make a weekly schedule, daily priority list and monthly calendar.