

Dealing with Procrastination

Do you put off doing some important things?



What Is Procrastination?

Procrastination means putting off something until a future time, postponing action on something you have decided is important to do. Procrastination has a clear cut element of emotional disturbance; feelings of guilt, anxiety, and inadequacy occur.

What Causes It?

- 1. Putting yourself down**
You think and act as if you believe that you must perform virtually all important tasks perfectly or as nearly perfectly as possible. People usually do this to try to win the approval of others, as well as themselves.
- 2. Low frustration tolerance**
You act as if you believe that difficult or boring work which causes some discomfort or anxiety is unbearable. You may tell yourself that you shouldn't have to do it or that you can't stand it. Fear of the unknown often adds to or causes some anxiety.
- 3. Hostility**
You may consciously or unconsciously feel controlled and resent that.
- 4. Lack of role models**
Some people who grow up in dysfunctional families don't have the opportunity to see adults set goals and move forward to completion.

What to do about it?

1. **Understand what is happening when you procrastinate.**
2. **Observe yourself doing your favorite, creative ways of procrastinating.** For example, a student noticed that she always painted a room when she needed to hunt for a job. Another student noticed that he sat in front of the TV when he needed to study for a math test. It may help to record the behavior observed.
3. **Take action**
 - Use a reminder appointment book or electronic personal digital assistant (PDA).
 - Make a list of the pros and cons for doing the task.
 - Break the task down into small parts.
 - Predict the difficulty and satisfaction of doing each part; contrast the prediction with the actual difficulty and satisfaction.
 - Plan realistic time limits and goals.
 - Use a relaxation exercise before beginning.
 - Visualize yourself calmly doing the task.
 - Anticipate the positive feelings you will have when it's done.
 - Make or go to an environment conducive to learning and thinking, and eliminate distractions.
 - Memorize aphorisms, such as "Doing gets it done. Or "Instead of all or nothing, why not bits and pieces."
4. **Read wise counsel:**
Read *The Procrastinator's Guide to Success* [electronic resource, BCCC Library], Lively, Lynn. ISBN 058518948X
5. **Visit these websites:**
<http://ub-counseling.buffalo.edu/stressprocrast>
<http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/procrastination>

To talk with a Bucks Counselor, call 215.968.8189 or email counseling@bucks.edu to schedule an appointment.

It's **FREE** and confidential.