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|  | |  | | --- | | Procrastination is putting off significant tasks and assignments to do at a later date, sometimes causing increasing levels of stress and anxiety. You procrastinate when you delay doing things you should be focusing on right now, usually in favour of doing something that is more enjoyable or that you are more comfortable doing.  Procrastination is usually referred to as "bad" but there is "good" procrastination too. Often, when we are putting off doing an important assignment, we can be side-tracked with lesser important duties like shopping or cleaning the house. People who are dedicated and focused on the assignment being done, literally procrastinate the smaller things, so therefore dedicate their time to what really needs to be done.  Procrastination can also be a useful tactic to overcome addictive behaviour, e.g. telling yourself that you are going to put off binge eating/smoking a cigarette until another day.  However, many of us fall into the category of "bad" procrastination, putting off tasks until a last minute rush to face the reality of the situation.  *Examples of Excuses*  "I'll just make one more cup of tea", followed by another and another and then "While I'm in the kitchen I may as well make my lunch" and "Oh I better clean the kitchen now" and "I better go to the supermarket for more food before it gets any later" etc....  "I need to call/email/text/write on Facebook to this person", followed by a few hours wasted on the internet or chatting to more friends.  "I'm not in the right mood", "I'm not feeling inspired right now", "I'm tired", "I'm hungry", "I need a walk".  *How to know if you are Procrastinating:*   * Reading instructions over and over without getting any actual work done. * Filling your day with low priority tasks from your To Do list. * Sitting down to a high-priority task and almost immediately getting up to make a cup of coffee or check your emails. * Leaving an item on your To Do list, even when you know that it is important. * Regularly saying "Yes" to unimportant tasks that others ask you to do, and filling your time with these instead of getting on with the important tasks already on your list.   *Why do people Procrastinate?*  The sheer size or difficulty of the job in question can feel so daunting and time-consuming that the person doesn't believe that he/she can do it. Although they usually KNOW that a certain assignment needs to be done urgently, something psychologically holds them back from carrying out the task.  Some procrastinators work as many hours in the day as other people (and sometimes longer hours) but they are bad time managers. They may feel that it is important to jump straight into every task, instead of prioritising between the important and less urgent duties.  Perfectionism can also add to the stress of a procrastinator; constantly reviewing a less important assignment instead of dedicating a greater amount of time to the bigger task. The fear of not completing an assignment to perfection can hold a person back so much that they do not even make an attempt to start it.  A fear of success can also make people procrastinate; perhaps the discomfort of extra attention from college friends or the void of a life goal connected with all the free time they will have when the task is completed e.g. a final college project.  Being under the control of an angry, pushy person can also make people procrastinate, if they are being influenced by whoever is shouting at them the loudest. A boss forcing people to make unreasonable sales targets or a college lecturer piling on too much work can cause people to retract and not enjoy what they do.  *Tips to Overcome Procrastination:*  Whatever the reasons are for procrastinating, it must be recognised and controlled before education and career opportunities are jeopardised.   * Be honest and admit to yourself that you are procrastinating. * Make a To Do list and prioritise from very urgent to the less important tasks. * Believe that you can do the assignment well, and by the deadline. * An assignment needs to be done; you can choose to beat yourself up about it or enjoy the process as much as you can. * Procrastinate the "little" things, like cleaning the house, unnecessary shopping the night before an exam, spending hours on Facebook etc. Prioritise the important things to do first. * Think of how much longer the assignment is going to take by dragging out the process- just get stuck into it now and know that you will of plenty of care-free time when it's finished. * Be disciplined with yourself- write your own schedule and stick to it. * If you are feeling overwhelmed by a huge project, break it down into small chunks. You can't do it all at once, but you can achieve your goals one step at a time. * Be aware of negative and perfectionist self-talk. Go easy on yourself and give yourself plenty credit for every part of the assignment you get done. Nobody is perfect- just give it your best shot. * Think back to a time when you did well in a task. You can do it again! * Give yourself rewards for completing part of a task, e.g. a nice lunch or new piece of clothes. * Ask a friend or co-worker to check up on you to make sure that you are working on the assignment. * Stop for a second and think, "Do I feel good or bad about this?". There is always an underlying reason for your behaviour. Are you doing something because you SHOULD do it (perhaps because of pushy parents) or because you want to do it? Maybe this is not the right time to do it (like deferring college for another year) or you could do something else entirely (like changing college course) that you will enjoy.   When the time is right, you believe that you can do it and you are focused on the finished assignment, motivation can come naturally and you are no longer stressfully forcing yourself to do anything. | |