

Overcoming Procrastination

While it's often labelled as 'lazy', procrastination is a valid emotional response to a situation or circumstance. Overcoming procrastination is a personal journey of recognizing, understanding, evaluating, and responding to this reaction with compassion, and implementing strategies to avoid it.

1. Notice it, slow it down



Reflect on your procrastination patterns, so that you may be able to notice your thoughts when they arise.

- What do you tend to procrastinate?
- How long do you think about doing the task?
- What do you do instead?
- What thoughts come up in these moments?

When you notice these patterns arise, try using the phrase "I'm noticing that..." or "I'm having the thought that..." to create space between the thought and your reaction to it.

2. Understand it

What is underlying your procrastination? When we take time to understand the beliefs that motivate our behaviour, we can start to address them. Below are a few possible mind states that may resonate with you.



I think that I will be in a better state to do the work at another time, even though I have time now.



I feel overwhelmed. There's just so much going on I can't prioritize the task.



I am afraid of not being good enough, or of failing.



I feel that the work will be frustrating, boring, or annoying.



It's too hard. I don't even know where to start.



I don't like external deadlines and expectations being imposed on me.



I struggle to work on the task without the pressure of a tight deadline.

Being a university student is challenging. Challenge is how we learn and grow! After you notice your thoughts, sit with them with compassion. Try finishing the phrase "of course..." to show yourself understanding and kindness.

3. Evaluate your thoughts

Without judgement or shaming, investigate your procrastinating mind states. Ask of them:

- Is this really **true**, or is this a narrative I'm telling myself?
- Is this **helpful**?
- Is this **solvable**? Can I address this concern? What do I have control over?

Based on your evaluation, respond to your thoughts...



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4. Respond

We can respond to our procrastinating mind states by turning towards and addressing them, and ultimately by redirecting back towards the task.

Access resources:



- Clarify steps and expectations (course materials, prof, peers)
- Access mental health support through the Counselling Centre

Adjust the task:



- Break down larger tasks into small, approachable steps.
- Could your approach be more engaging or joyful?

Lead with your body:



- Connect with your senses and guide yourself into the task one step at a time
- Narrate the process

Respond with other perspectives:



- "I have to..." → "I get to..."
- "I should..." → "I could..."
- "I can't..." → "I can..."

Plan and strategize to avoid procrastination



Connect with your underlying motivation:

- Why is the task a priority?

5. Strategies to avoid procrastination

Use time management strategies



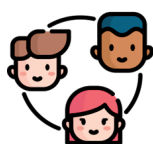
- Make a plan for bigger projects; outline specific steps and sub-deadlines
- Schedule work periods with set goals and time limits
- Use a timer, set breaks

Develop routines



- Have a dedicated workspace separate from where you rest
- Prepare your mind, body, and environment to work
- Plan demanding tasks for when you expect to be most alert

Integrate accountability



- Check in and study with peers
- Book a Writing Centre appointment or a meeting with your professor before an assignment is due

Trick yourself into working



- Lower your expectations for a study session.
- Commit to just 15 minutes of work or a less-involved task?



Remember that procrastination comes from and along with big emotions and experiences. Be kind to yourself.

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