

UWE Wellbeing Service

Procrastination

Procrastination is when you decide to put off doing important tasks that you are actually committed to doing in favour of doing less important things despite the negative consequences.

Many of us procrastinate but, for some people, procrastination can really take over and stop them living the kind of lives they want to. Before we can change things we need to try and understand what is going on – *why are we doing it?*

Although it can seem simply “stupid” and unhelpful, there is usually some underlying “distorted” way in which it does make sense for us – that’s *why* we keep doing it!

We all have our own assumptions and “rules” about ourselves and about life and sometimes these can prompt us to procrastinate. When we put things off we get some kind of internal pay-off from it even though the external impacts are negative.

For example, if you are **afraid of failure**, or **disapproval**, or **believe you must do everything perfectly**. With this “rule” you will feel anxious about any task where it is possible to fail or be assessed. So in some ways it seems to make sense to delay or avoid the task and the anxiety. You procrastinate and you get short-term relief from the anxiety and often enjoy doing something more fun instead.

But in the longer-term the **impacts are unhelpful**. You don’t get to disprove your “rule” and find out that it’s actually acceptable and bearable to do something imperfectly. You start to feel guilty or ashamed and self-critical of your procrastination; that makes you feel worse and reinforces your “rule”. The tasks pile up and become more daunting.

Other attitudes we have, like *needing to be in control*, *low self-confidence*, *fear of uncertainty* and many other assumptions can also drive procrastination in different ways.

***** It is possible to overcome procrastination and regain the control to choose when and how you do important things in your life *****

The websites, books and apps below can help you understand when, how and why you procrastinate and then how to challenge and start to overcome that habit.

They will help you:

- Identify and start to challenge your own unhelpful rules and assumptions that are behind your own procrastination
- Learn to live with the discomfort they cause you
- Dismiss the excuses you use to justify procrastinating
- Identify the positive and negative consequences for you
- Learn practical ideas to change your procrastination habit

UWE Wellbeing Service

Procrastination

Websites

The websites below provide information on managing procrastination:

- **CCI** (Centre for Clinical Interventions) provides great information on understanding procrastination and on finding practical strategies to tackle <http://tinyurl.com/3oto2b2>
- **Cal Poly** offers another clear insight into different underlying causes for procrastination and how to manage it <http://tinyurl.com/27rnx6>
- **Wait but why?** If you like to learn with a bit of humour and a few cartoons try this and get to meet the Instant Gratification Monkey, Panic Monster and other characters that you may recognise. <http://tinyurl.com/pzmf2nb>

Video links and podcasts

- **Ted Talk** by a young entrepreneur about how and why we procrastinate ;; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WD440CY2Vs0>

Apps

- **Procraster** - an app with practical tools to help you start and manage tasks on your <http://procrasterapp.com/>
- **Beat procrastination** – an app from Andrew Johnson, uses guided meditations to help overcome barriers to getting things done <http://tinyurl.com/hfbl2oh>

UWE library

- **Student procrastination:** seize the day and get more work done by Michael Tefula (2014) [Available 378.170281 TEF Frenchay](#)

Further reading

- Jane B. Burka, Lenora M. Yuen (2008) **Procrastination: Why You Do It, What to Do about it**