

Procrastination: What it is and how to stop it

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Why do we procrastinate?

Procrastination is when we deliberately avoid starting or completing a task.

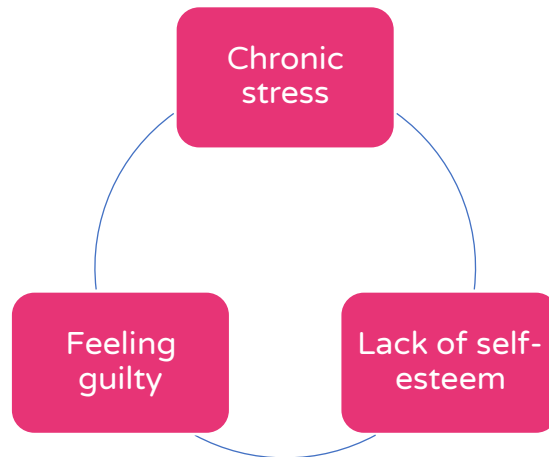
This may be because a particular task is challenging, or it's just something we don't enjoy doing.

While it may seem that procrastination is a product of laziness or a lack of time management skills, it can actually stem from more emotional causes.

People procrastinate to avoid being in a negative emotional state. Some of these are:

- Anxiety
 - A task may seem very difficult or challenging.
 - You may have an overwhelming amount to do and don't know where to begin.
- Fear of failure
 - Worrying about the consequences of failing in this task, and so not wanting to begin.
- Being self-critical
 - Setting targets for yourself and not meeting them, then engaging in negative self-talk.
- Discomfort
 - Feeling uncomfortable about the task at hand, perhaps due to lack of experience or understanding.

Consequences of procrastination



Procrastination can lead to a number of negative consequences, such as missing deadlines, avoiding tasks that are important for your health, or neglecting your responsibilities.

This can go on to affect your mental wellbeing, characterised by chronic stress, a lack of self-esteem, and feelings of guilt or shame around the behaviour.

Procrastination can create a vicious cycle in which you continue to procrastinate in an effort to avoid negative feelings, when in fact you're only making them worse.

How to stop procrastinating

Check in with how you are feeling

Be kind to yourself

Remind yourself 'why'

Short-term rewards

Remove barriers

Check in with how you are feeling

This is an important step to understand why exactly you're procrastinating. Are you feeling anxious or uncomfortable about the task? Identify these feelings, so you can then challenge them.

Be kind to yourself

You're not procrastinating because you're lazy or because you're not good enough.

Understand that procrastination happens to everyone, and it's a behaviour that can be changed.

Remind yourself 'why'

What are the long-term rewards of completing this task?

Think about how you would feel if you achieved this.

Use those feelings to try and make the task seem more appealing to you.

Short-term rewards

Treat yourself to short-term rewards, so you have a more immediate benefit.

Have a nice meal, or something that you will find motivating in the short-term.

Remove barriers

Identify any barriers that you have to completing the task.

Do your energy levels tend to wane in the afternoon? In that case, get started in the morning.

Do you get distracted by notifications on your phone? Then switch it off.