

7 Reasons We Procrastinate and Strategies to Overcome Them



Ask anyone and they will tell you they have been guilty of it at one time or another. Some find it exhilarating while others find it stressful. What is it? It's procrastination, the formal term for putting off or avoiding a task or work that needs to be completed, usually within a specific timeframe.

Very few actually describe procrastination as exhilarating. I for one, fall in the "procrastination is stressful" category. However, procrastination can be used to advantage if you understand why you procrastinate.

So, why do we procrastinate? Some might conclude that it is laziness but the men and women that I spoke with hardly fall into that category. In most instances their reasons for procrastination included one of the following:

1. **Guilt** -I just don't want to do it
2. **Inadequacy** -I don't know how to do it or I'm afraid I won't do it well
3. **Fear** -I'm afraid of what the outcome might be or I'm uncertain of the outcome
4. **Irrelevant** -It's not important to me
5. **Time Management** -I have plenty of time to get this done
6. **Perfectionism** -I won't be able to meet my high standards
7. **Ambiguity** -I'm not sure what needs to be done

Many of the individuals I spoke with told me that they often experience at least one or a combination of these factors when procrastinating. So, is it hopeless? Of course not! Some of the most successful people I know procrastinate and are still successful in completing tasks. Here are some tips that you can use.

First, identify and acknowledge what is causing you to procrastinate in the first place. Write it down and analyze it. This will help you put your concerns for completing a task or job into perspective. Then, visualize yourself completing the task successfully. Athletes have long been known to visualize themselves in making a difficult shot or winning a competition. This can certainly work for you.

Once you have analyzed your reasons for procrastination, then break the task down into manageable components. Often the overall job can be overwhelming but once you begin to break it down, tasks have a way of becoming more manageable and doable. In addition, this allows you to determine if there are components that you can delegate or components where others can coach you or provide you with other kinds of support.

And finally, determine what it will take to motivate you to complete the task at hand. Having a meaningful reward mechanism in place helps. One woman I spoke with said, "If I didn't create opportunities to reward myself, I would never get the tasks completed." For some tasks it might be as simple as allowing yourself to take a break upon completion, for another it might be treating yourself to a special lunch or a special purchase. Whatever it is, find something that is meaningful for you.

Understanding why you procrastinate and then employing some of these tips will help you take the stress out of getting things done. So, what are you waiting for?

Note: For the record, I'm delighted to report that I did NOT procrastinate in writing this article!

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