

## Health

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### Learn to tackle your problems with procrastination

I once saw a cartoon that said, "When I get the feeling to do something, I lie down until the feeling goes away." This is a sentiment that many people suffering from procrastination say to themselves as they struggle to shake off procrastination. There may be spurts of feeling like the problem is solved, but without close attention to each piece of a complex set of problems, procrastination often returns.

Procrastination can be the result of a variety of problems:

**Not setting priorities:** Procrastinators often start with tasks that are the most convenient or interesting rather than setting priorities. As they work on these "easy, interesting" tasks, others begin to build up. Soon there is a list of tasks waiting that are urgent. The solution: Learn how to set priorities and stick to them. **The ABC method** allows you to divide tasks into just three categories: A, vital; B, important; and C, nice. Under each letter write the tasks that fall into that category in order of their importance. Now, start at A and complete each A task, then go to B and complete B tasks, etc.

**Distraction:** Many procrastinators are easily distracted and will say they did not get a job completed because "something else came up." **The solution:** Limit distractions by saying "no" to yourself when you find yourself getting distracted or trapped into doing too much.

**Forgetfulness:** Procrastinators believe they have an excellent memory, even though they appear to have forgotten and you see multiple slips of "reminder" papers filling their pockets and purses. **The solution:** Acknowledge a problem with forgetfulness, although it must never be used as an excuse for inaction.

**"Lumping" or "chunking":** Many procrastinators believe that a task comes as an inseparable whole that cannot be subdivided and dealt with systematically. **The solution:** Break the task down into component parts and deal with each part separately.

**Fear:** Fear motivated procrastination usually expresses itself as avoidance - the person either delays performing the task or waits for its expiration so that it no longer has to be dealt with. **The solution:** Ask yourself, "What am I afraid of?" A trained counselor can help you identify the sources of fear and their effects on your self-esteem, and provide direction in dealing with these problems.

**Perfectionism:** Most procrastinators do not think of themselves as perfectionists because they feel that if they were, they would get things done. However, perfectionism can result in starting a task and then giving up in exhaustion when it isn't done the right way, or never starting because you might not do the job well.

**To get past procrastination,** get a simple appointment book that has a one week spread when the book is opened to help you organize your days. Use your book every day to write down the following items: One, write daily "to do" lists and check the items off as completed. Two, break down the tasks into tangible stage goals, provide these goals with appropriate deadlines and then write the deadlines into your book. Three, break tasks down into manageable chunks of 15 minutes. As you complete each chunk and learn how to estimate how much time each will take, slowly increase the size of your chunks. Four, set realistic plans for each day based on what you are learning. And finally, remember that it takes a great deal of wisdom and effort to break the clutches of procrastination, but the results are worth while. Don't create impossible situations that keep the cycle of procrastination going.