

B: Procrastination can be task and time related Lesson

Introduction

Almost all people procrastinate sometimes with some tasks, but on the other hand, very few people procrastinate all the time with all tasks. Next, we will explore your own situation more. Do you procrastinate with a particular task or with possibly many tasks? Does your procrastination have something to do with the current moment or is it something you have been familiar with over the years? Go over the following four points and reflection tasks in each, and you will gain a clearer picture of what your own procrastination is related to.

Read more:

- Steel (2007) Nature of procrastination
- Inkinen ym. (2012) Aikaansaamattomuuden psykologiaa

1. Procrastinating with many tasks over the years

Procrastinating with many tasks over the years

It is generally known that procrastination is related some quite stable traits of human personality. As it is with many other situations, people have not gotten equal share of the tendency to procrastinate, but rather some people are more prone to procrastination than others. On the other hand, those of us who are prone to procrastination can learn ways to get things done more. Next, we will present some personality traits that are associated with procrastination in various situations for longer periods.

1) The clearest personality trait that predisposes procrastination is conscientiousness or better yet, lack of conscientiousness. People who are not very conscientious often do not set clear deadlines for themselves, organize their lives much, are not exact and careful, and may describe themselves as lazy, without any self-discipline. Getting far in studies and succeeding in them requires conscientiousness, which is why many university students are more conscientious than the average. However, there are also university students with lower levels of conscientiousness. If you recognize yourself as someone who is not so conscientious, it certainly does not mean that you could not learn to set very high goals or to strive for those goals in a careful and patient manner. It just requires a bit of learning.

2) Another bundle of traits that can predispose procrastination is one combining distractibility, impulsivity, and tendency to get bored. Some of us are like [the cocker spaniel in this video](#), who changes direction upon any external stimulus, is ready to jump from one task to another and who gets very bored when faced with the same task for a long time, wanting to do something else. It is easy to imagine that in this case doing something for a longer time might be difficult and require a lot of training. On the other hand, when active and impulsive people can direct their (often) vast energy levels to a suitable direction, they can get many things accomplished. If you recognize yourself in this description and you have suffered from procrastination for a longer time, there is hope. In some cases, it is possible to find that people with this bundle of traits could have Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity

Disorder (ADHD), about which you can read more [here](#). If you suspect that you may have ADHD, please contact student health services (YTHS).

3) A third factor that can predispose prolonged procrastination is not exactly a personality trait but rather a habit – the habit of not getting one’s studies done. Studying in the university, especially in some fields, can be very free and require a lot of independent work. Students may have great freedom in choosing when and how they study. One can easily spend time on hobbies, sitting at the computer, student union activities, or with friends instead of studying. If this continues sufficiently regularly, there is a risk that this lack of studying may become a habit. Once a habit is formed, it may be difficult to get rid of it. This habit of not studying can have its origins from earlier schooling if it was possible to succeed in comprehensive school or upper secondary school without making much effort.

1. Reflection task

Describe briefly here if you recognize any of the traits or habits that can predispose procrastination.

2. Procrastinating with many tasks recently

Sometimes in life there are situations and times when one procrastinates even if normally one gets things done efficiently. In such times, we are not dealing with a permanent method of functioning or a personality trait, but rather with the life situation or even with the mood in general. Next, we will present some factors that could be related to recent procrastination, even if you have gotten things done efficiently in the past.

1) One of the clearest factors behind procrastination is tiredness or lack of energy. When a person becomes tired, they often also start feeling that they cannot get things done. Sometimes it is difficult to notice your own tiredness and you might just wonder you cannot things done. Whenever you find yourself procrastinating with many things, you might want to ask yourself if you could be tired. And if the answer is yes, give yourself time to rest and to recover. Sometimes it is possible for a person to be so tired that it does not go away with short rest; perhaps the person could be suffering from burnout or depression. If you feel deeply tired, and that it does not get any better with several days or weeks of rest, it is a good idea to seek medical help (for instance YTHS). You can evaluate your own mood or level of tiredness through the tools in [Health Village](#).

2) In addition to tiredness, procrastination is also affected by energy levels. Does your own procrastination have something to do with a certain time of the day, for instance, evening or morning? Or perhaps with a certain season, such as spring, autumn or the darkness of the early winter? Do you recognize other rhythm that could influence your procrastination? These could be important factors at play when trying to understand procrastination.

3) The life situation can have a great effect on procrastination. Especially great moments of changes such as moving to a new region, falling in love, losing a loved one or other similar strong experiences can create a situation, in which one can procrastinate on many things. In such situations, routines can help you function at least in a relatively efficient way. It is also important to let your mind adjust to the changes and accept the procrastination.

2. Reflection task

Reflect here briefly about your own energy levels right now and consider whether these have any relation to your procrastination

3. Procrastinating with one particular task in recent times

Usually, procrastination can be related to a certain task or tasks. A student can, for example, get many things done in one course, but not get things done in another course, despite its high importance. Typically, a student may not get much studying done at home but does other things instead, such as cooking, cleaning, or surfing in social media. Next, we will list various things that may be related to whether we can a certain task done or not.

1) Unpleasantness related to the task is probably the most important quality that makes us not want to get started with it. If a task feels unpleasant, this can stem from many factors: the task can be difficult, challenging, confusing or unclear. Or it could be that the task is just boring and perhaps even too easy and trivial, which is why it might feel unpleasantly futile.

It could also be that the task in question is quite neutral, but it is related to something that is unpleasant. For example, if you feel anxious about presenting, even preparing the presentation can feel unpleasant. Or if you have received strong critique before on a similar task that you would have to do again, the pure starting of the task can bring unpleasant memories and images to the mind. People want to naturally avoid and postpone everything that feels unpleasant, even if those tasks were important.

It is also possible that doing the task feels unpleasant because you are not motivated, or the task just seems useless. You have no inner motivation to complete the task, and no other external reason, such as graduation or salary, depends on doing on the task. In such an instance, it seems best to not complete the task.

2) Doubting your own abilities. Another very important factor behind procrastination is doubting your abilities. If you do not believe that you could get through the task successfully, you most likely won't get started with it. For example, if math has been giving you difficulties and the upcoming task would require advanced mathematical methods, it is quite likely that you might not get started with the task altogether. Sometimes doubting your own ability could be related to some part of the task or even the time it may require of you. It could be that you may have a conception of yourself as someone who works poorly on work requiring long-term commitment. Then it could be possible that you just cannot get started with a larger project work or thesis because the job just feels too demanding in relation to your abilities.

3) The third important factor behind procrastination is time- more exactly, the available time you have for completing the task. People tend to get more energetic with getting things done when the deadline approaches. If the deadline for completing the task is far away, it is easy not to get started with the task. This entails both wisdom and a trap. People are good at optimizing their time and energy use. They start getting things done when realizing they can no longer postpone it. The challenge in this way of working is that often people overestimate their ability to complete things at the last minute, which is why the tasks can remain undone or are completed in an unsatisfactory manner. This can cause stress and blaming oneself, which in turn does not promote getting things done. Optimizing time use requires practice, and even then, you do not always succeed.

3. Reflection task

Describe briefly here a task with which you procrastinate. What kind of feelings do you have about this task? Do you feel capable with this task? Does the task have some deadline? If so, when should it be completed?

4. Procrastinating with one task for a longer period

Sometimes it can happen that one should complete a task, but even after spending a longer period on it, one cannot get the task done or it does not go forward. This tends to happen usually with larger projects, such as the thesis or a whole course. It can also happen that something relatively small workwise, such as finishing an exercise or a learning journal, can remain unfinished for a longer period. Often when one procrastinates with one task for longer time, the situation is related to similar factors than when procrastinating with something momentarily. The task can be difficult, boring, unclear or one's belief in the ability to complete is weak and the completion of the task has no clear deadline. In long term, small or medium-size difficulties can become enormous mountains in one's mind. Climbing on top of the mountain seems challenging to get started with. On the other hand, it can be very rewarding to tackle the tasks that have been stuck for a long time and this is something worth striving for.

1) It is paradoxical that there is one factor that might usually protect us from procrastination, but this same factor can also, in some instances, turn against ourselves and cause long-term procrastination with something. Being demanding toward oneself means that you want to get things done properly and fulfill the criteria set for the task; and in fact, you demand more and more of yourself. You want to do your best with the task or even achieve perfection. Often this kind of attitude leads to excellent outcomes and to getting things done as well. But when a demanding person for some reason cannot get a task done, it can cause strong sentiments of guilt and inferiority. And then the person is faced with a difficult task, which is in and of itself unpleasant: facing one's own vast and difficult emotions. Getting things done can feel impossible, but of course even then, it is possible to find ways to get things done sufficiently. Please see this [video](#).

2) Learning difficulties can often come out in that learning something specific or doing something specific seem insurmountably difficult, even if other things were going well. For example, in the case of dyslexia, reading is slow and requires a lot of time, mistakes can happen, or the text does not remain in the memory despite a lot of effort. This can lead to the student avoiding all kinds of tasks that involve reading or writing a lot of text and to procrastination. If you think you may have a learning difficulty, please contact student health services (YTHS). [Read more about learning difficulties](#).

How do you get your things done?

You have now read about getting things done and factors related to procrastination. You have also reflected on the effect different factors may have on your own procrastination. Try to summarize now for yourself what your procrastination is about. You can think of one specific task with which you procrastinate. Or if you wish, you can do this exercise by thinking of the different factors behind your procrastination on various tasks. Can you find common factors or is your procrastination very task specific?