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## Tips for Procrastination

**Do you have a procrastination problem?** Do you find yourself in any of the following situations on a regular basis due to procrastination?

- Realizing you didn't leave yourself enough time to finish a task by the deadline.
- Feeling inadequately prepared for meetings.
- Trying to force yourself to do a task.
- Being stressed about time as you rush to appointments.
- Telling yourself "I'll take care of that later."
- Waiting to feel more inspired or motivated to do a task.

### What drives procrastination?

1. Fear that it will be unpleasant. (The more we imagine these negative aspects, the less incentive we have to get started.)
2. Fear of not doing a good job.
3. Permission-giving thoughts: sometimes we tell ourselves we deserve a break or convince ourselves we'll work better at some point in the future. These thoughts make sense when taking a break is the best course of action. Often, these self-driven statements drive unhealthy habits of avoidance.
4. Negative reinforcement: every time we put off a task we think will be unpleasant, we experience a feeling of relief. The brain interprets that relief as a reward, and we're most likely to repeat an action that led to reward.

### Strategies for Beating Procrastination

**Think** (cognitive) Much of our procrastination comes from how we think about the task and about our willingness and ability to complete it.

- Notice permission-giving thoughts that bend the truth.
- Remind yourself why you don't want to procrastinate.

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- Beware of virtuous avoidance. (when we're motivated to avoid a task, we might find other ways to make ourselves feel productive (helping a friend or doing busy work))
- Decide to start.
- Acknowledge that you probably won't feel like doing it later, either.
- Challenge beliefs about having to do something "perfectly".

## **Act** (behavioral)

- Use external reminders.
- Create a distraction-free zone.
- Use a calendar.
- Break down a big task into manageable subtasks.
- Finish a task, even if it's hard.
- Commit to starting a task imperfectly.
- Work next to others who are working.
- Use shorter, uninterrupted work sessions.
- Give yourself small rewards.

## **Be** (mindfulness)

- Accept discomfort: it's not such a bad thing to be uncomfortable in the service of something we care about more than our comfort.
- Come into the present: procrastination is often based on fear of not doing well, which is future-oriented. When we focus our attention on the present, we can let go of worries about our performance and direct our energy toward whatever piece of the task we're working on.
- Return to the intended focus: meditation teaches our minds to return to their intended focus when we realize they've drifted.
- Notice and acknowledge how you work best.

Book: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Made Simple By: Seth J. Gillihan PhD

Worksheet by: Janay Bailey, LMHC