
The Mathis Group's

Messenger

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Procrastination

To Do Or Not To Do -- That Is The Question!

By Dr. Keith Mathis

Are you a procrastinator? Do you intentionally and habitually put off doing something that should be done? Many people do procrastinate on the job and at home.

There are two types of procrastination – unconscious and conscious. Unconscious procrastination happens because of internal reasons that influence your hesitancy to do something. They are not clearly in your mind, and you may not even acknowledge them. You just know that you don't want to do it. Conscious procrastination is the result of known personal reasons for putting off doing something. You are very aware of these reasons mentally and emotionally.

There are many causes of procrastination. For each individual, the cause may be different. What influences one person may have no effect on another. For example, some may procrastinate because of their fear of failure while others may procrastinate because of their fear of success. Some want to avoid judgement from others. Some feel hopeless; some are simply overwhelmed by their circumstances. Perhaps they feel they lack enough information to get started. They do not feel the urgency. They may want to remain in control. Maybe they just want to avoid an unpleasant task. And, perhaps the most common cause of procrastination – it has become a habit!

If you have the procrastination habit, there are things you can do. Here are some ways to stop procrastination. First, get started! Once you are in motion, it will be easier to stick to your task.

Work with the time available to you. Sometimes you will estimate a project may take ten or twelve hours so you wait for a day when you can devote that much time to it. Those days are sometimes hard to come by. Instead of putting the project off, break it up into smaller pieces that you can work into your schedule.

Perhaps you can “create” time. Is your schedule set so that there are empty blocks of time in which nothing can be accomplished? Perhaps you can rearrange your schedule so that you can make the most of your twenty-four day. Be willing to work in stages. You can always get a little something done on your project.

Set deadlines for yourself. Then, reward yourself when you meet the deadline!

Ask yourself, “Is there an easier way to do it?” What's the worst thing that will happen if I do it?" Give yourself some perspective in to what you are beginning.

Listen to your moods. Plan an appropriate reason to be motivated, and work within your personality characteristics. You know yourself better than anyone – what can you do?

Be opportunistic. Look for challenging tasks in which you can be successful. What projects can you take on that will benefit you, your family, your friends, or your co-workers?

Expect problems. Be realistic and know that with any project, there will be obstacles and hurdles you must overcome. Do not let these keep you from starting. Simply anticipate and be prepared to deal with setbacks.

*Procrastination is the fertilizer that makes
difficulties grow.
E.C. McKenzie*

*Waste of time is the most extravagant of all
expense.
Theophrastus (372-287 B.C.)
Philosopher*

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How To Meet Deadlines

The business world is filled with deadlines – some realistic, some impossible. Everyone has twenty-four hours in the day; yet, some seem to accomplish much more than others. List your goals and set priorities each day with deadlines for completion. Use these deadlines to measure your progress. Say “no” to interruptions for less important matters.

Remember to set your own deadlines when others do not. When receiving an assignment or a request, ask when it should be completed. Then set your own deadline with a realistic cushion to allow for the unexpected. Honor your deadline by taking it seriously.

Set deadlines on tasks you pass on to others. Ask when your request can be met, and then agree on a deadline. Be sure it is realistic; be sensitive to their schedule and capabilities.

Stick to a job until it is finished. Do not permit interruptions except for more important matters. Recognize that interruptions are the most serious enemy of deadlines. Drop-in interruptions come at a moment’s notice, and if they are not an emergency they should be rescheduled. Needful interruptions are those filled with data and communication and should be taken care of immediately. Needless interruptions come from individuals who often take up our time in person or on the phone without a real purpose. Explain your deadline and suggest getting together later.



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Learn To Say “No”

Sleep on it.

Compute the amount of time required if you say “yes.”

Ask if the activity relates to your goals.

Do not apologize.


Look him/her straight in the eye.

Thank him/her for considering you.

Explain how it will conflict with other commitments.

Suggest someone else for the job.

Say “yes” and then delegate it to someone else.



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