Overcoming Procrastination

George Mason University
Learning Services
"Procrastination" Tales of Mere Existence
Goals

- Consequences of procrastination
- Factors that cause procrastination
- Strategies to overcome procrastination
Consequences

- Stress
- lower grades
- lost opportunities
- career troubles
- unnecessary expenses (e.g. late fees)
- health problems
- Resentment from others
- Destroys teamwork
Causes of Procrastination

★ What are some of the causes?
★ What things do you say to yourself?
★ Complete the Rationalizations worksheet
**Rationalizations**

- **Ignorance**
  - "I didn't know I was supposed to do that."

- **Skill deficiency**
  - "I don't know how to do it."

- **Apathy**
  - "I really don't want to do this."
  - "It really doesn't make any difference if I put this off."
  - "No one really cares whether I do this or not."
  - "I need to be in the mood. I'm not."
Rationalizations

- **Fixed habits**
  - "But I've always done it this way and it's hard to change."
  - "I know I can pull this out at the last minute."
  - "I work better under pressure."

- **Inertia**
  - "I just can't seem to get started."
Rationalizations

- Frail memory
  - "I just forgot."

- Physical problems
  - "I couldn't do it; I was sick."

- "Appropriate" delays
  - "I'm just waiting for the best time to do it."
  - "I need time to think this through."
  - "This other opportunity will never come again, so I can't pass it up."
Strategies

🌟 Brainstorm ways to overcome procrastination
Self-Regulation

- Need to learn to delay gratification
- Procrastination is a learned behavior
## Prioritization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Urgent</th>
<th>Not Urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quadrant 1</td>
<td>Quadrant 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deadlines &amp; Emergencies</td>
<td>Things that are coming up in the future that will become urgent if not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>Quadrant 3</td>
<td>Quadrant 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interruptions</td>
<td>Time wasters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Write down 15 things

- Worked on PPT presentation for class
- Read 1 chapter of accounting
- Played GTA
- Went shopping at Tysons Corner

Add these activities to the prioritization grid
Work expands to fill the time allotted.

If you have 2 weeks for a paper, it will take two weeks to get it done, usually at the last minute.

Set a deadline that is difficult to meet and reward yourself for getting it done early.
Implementation Intention

- What
- When
- Where
- 8x more likely to do it.

(Owens, Bowman & Dill, 2008)
“Of all the virtues we can learn, no trait is more useful, more essential for survival and more likely to improve the quality of life than the ability to transform adversity into an enjoyable challenge.”

~ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
Get It Done!

- Complete the handout with tasks you have been procrastinating on and set implementation intentions to complete each one.
Pomodoro Technique

- Set a goal for the work session
- Set timer for 25 minutes
- Get as much done as possible towards that goal
- Set timer for 5 minutes and take a break
- Set a new goal and repeat
- Take a 1 hour break after 4 cycles (2 hours)
Ten Ways to “Do it Now”

1. Rational self-talk – metacognition
2. Positive self-statements
3. Avoid catastrophizing
4. Design clear goals
5. Set Priorities
Ten Ways to “Do it Now”

6. Break it down
7. Get Organized
8. Take a Stand – commit!
9. Use prompts
10. Reward yourself – reinforcement works!
Questions/Evaluations