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English 2010

25 January 2012

**Only You Can Prevent Procrastination**

It’s 7:00 p.m. the night before your paper is due for one of your college classes. You’re sitting at your computer and you think, I’ll just check my email and maybe my Facebook page real quick and then I’ll start my assignment and still have plenty of time to get it done. After you finish checking your email and Facebook page, and various other web links that caught your interest, you realize that it’s already 9:30 p.m. You open up your computer’s word processing program to get your assignment started. You get a few of the paper’s main paragraphs typed before you run into writer’s block. A glance at the clock tells you that it is now 11:45 p.m. Panic and anxiety start to set in, and you begin to wonder if you’ll get the assignment done without pulling an all-nighter. By the time you finish your paper it’s after 3:00 a.m., you’re not completely satisfied with the finished product, but you figure it’s not too bad even though you procrastinated, and that it’ll have to do. Now that you’ve finished your paper, and you’re so tired that you can barely keep your eyes open, you finally crawl into bed for a nap before you have to get up and get ready for your classes. As you drift off to sleep, you think wearily to yourself, why do I always procrastinate?

Why do students procrastinate? And more specifically, why is it that I procrastinate? I’ve pondered those questions, especially the latter, many times throughout my academic career. Most often on the days that my assignments were due and I felt like a zombie because of how late I stayed up in order to finish said assignment. Each time it’s the same thing, I get an assignment and I tell myself that I’ll start working on it right away so I can save myself the extra hassle, stress, and anxiety. But once it’s time to start working on the assignment, the same excuses, rationalizations, and distractions get in the way of my good intentions. And those same excuses or rationalizations that I use in order to avoid doing my homework are always pathetic. Over estimating the amount of time I have to complete an assignment is a frequent rationalization I use in order to spend my time doing something I find more enjoyable. When the computer is needed in order for me to complete a homework assignment, (which is almost all the time), I always find that the internet is a great source of distractions and time wasters in case I just don’t feel like doing my homework. If I find that the internet doesn’t suffice my time wasting needs, I can always find a plethora of things to distract me around the house.

Some of these excuses or distractions probably sound familiar to you, and perhaps you’ve even used these excuses when you’ve procrastinated. Procrastination is something that I’m sure all students have done at one time or another, but for me, procrastination is a demon that I’ve struggled with for a long time. This struggle of mine was especially bad during the fall semester of 2011. Every major assignment and paper that I was given during that semester I started to write and/or to finish the night before it was due. On the days that my assignments were due, I averaged about an hour and a half of sleep before I had to get up and get ready for my classes. Even though I knew that procrastination was a bad habit to have, and I hated trying to keep my heavy eyelids open in class because of my lack of sleep, I never bothered to try and break myself of the habit.

One reason I didn’t try to stop procrastinating was because even though I procrastinated on all of my major assignments, I usually received an A- on my work. And if I did think about trying to stop procrastinating, I would always come to the conclusion that if it’s not broken, don’t fix it. Another reason that I kept procrastinating was because the amount of effort it would take in order to stop, and to create new study habits, was probably more than I wanted to admit that I would be willing to make.

Once the fall semester of 2011 ended, and I looked back at all of the sleep I lost and all of the unnecessary stress I caused myself, my reasons for continuing to procrastinate began to look quite flimsy. So this year, as a kind of New Year’s Resolution of sorts, I have decided to wean myself off of procrastination in hopes of eventually kicking the habit. Since I am a psychology major, I decided to do some digging and find out the psychological reasonings behind procrastination in order to gain a better understanding of why I myself procrastinate, and to find some things that I could do to help break my habit. During my digging, I’ve found that procrastination is a type of avoidance technique. In the case of procrastination, we avoid starting or completing a difficult task because we do not like the task, or it makes us feel anxious and stressed, so we delay the difficult task in order to feel good at that moment in time (*Procrastination: Oops, Where Did the Day Go?*). I also found that because procrastination adds to stress levels and anxiety, it weakens your immune system and wears out your body faster (*Ending Procrastination*).

Besides the psychological reasonings behind procrastination, I also was able to find eight tips and strategies for me to follow in order for me to reduce my procrastination habit. The first tip is to make a list of everything that you need to accomplish for the day. The second and third tips include writing a statement of intention, and setting yourself realistic goals. Tip numbers four and five are to break down your list into specific tasks, and to make those tasks meaningful. The sixth tip, (which is probably my favorite), is to promise yourself a reward. Tip number seven is all about honesty, and eliminating the tasks that you never plan on doing. The eighth and final tip is to estimate the amount of time that you think it will take in order for you to complete a task, and to increase that amount by 100% (*Ending Procrastination*). I think that these tips and strategies will be very useful to me, especially since they’re simple and will be easy for me to incorporate into my study habits right now, and throughout the rest of my academic career. The first tip of making a list and also the last tip of giving yourself more time to complete a task, I will probably use the most. I’m the kind of person that likes to make lists of the things I need or need to accomplish, and this will help me break it down to a day-by-day basis. And as I previously mentioned, I am really good at misjudging the time that I have to complete an assignment, and the last tip will definitely help me to improve my time management skills. I also think that tip number six is a good one too; because I think giving yourself a short-term incentive will help you accomplish your long-term goals.

With all the information I have gathered and these eight tips, it has helped to give me a better understanding of why I procrastinate and how to overcome it. This research has also helped me to realize and come to terms with some of my suspicions about myself and the way I operate that I already had. In the past there have been times that I know procrastination has played a part in my catching of a cold or other sickness, and I’m definitely one of those that put off a task because I don’t like it. Another one of the pitfalls of procrastination that I fall into is that sometimes I think I have more time than I actually do to complete my assignment, or the assignment takes me about twice as long as I expected. Also, the tips and strategies for reducing procrastination that I found, along with my newfound understanding, will help me in my ongoing process of breaking the habit of procrastination and reducing my struggle with that particular demon.

Works Cited

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