

Procrastination Problems



Putting off 'til tomorrow what needs to be done today! Many students are afflicted with the procrastination tendency. Up to 70 percent of them identify as procrastinators, according to *Psychology Today*. It's what keeps them up all night cramming or finishing papers. It's what causes them to tell you they'll do something but not follow through. It's an affliction with both mental and physical impacts.

Procrastination isn't just a form of laziness. It comes about for a variety of reasons, including:

- ✓ avoiding negative experiences
- ✓ depression
- ✓ self-judgment
- ✓ anticipating the worst
- ✓ a need for love
- ✓ perfectionism
- ✓ a rigid identity
- ✓ fear of others' response/evaluation
- ✓ a lack of training
- ✓ low tolerance for frustration
- ✓ being passive
- ✓ hostility
- ✓ not feeling like life is fair
- ✓ being overextended

Telltale Signs

While many of us have procrastination tendencies, it doesn't necessarily mean we are full-fledged procrastinators. Some of us may simply be putting way too much on our daily To Do lists. Dr. Joseph Ferrari, an associate professor of psychology at DePaul University (IL), told *Psychology Today* that real procrastinators do five telltale things:

1. Underestimate how much time it'll take to get something done.
2. Overestimate the amount of time they have left to get something done.
3. Overestimate how motivated they'll feel the "next time" when they expect they'll get something done.
4. Mistakenly believe that working when they're not in the mood is less than optimal.
5. Mistakenly believe that, in order to succeed at a task, they need to feel like doing it.

Helping the Procrastinating Student

We've all seen procrastinators do everything but what they need to be doing, whether it's checking email, going out, taking on other projects or finding people and tasks to distract them. This can really derail college students who need to keep on track with their studies and other commitments in order to succeed. Chronic procrastinators even risk dropping out of college.

If you're concerned that your student may be procrastinating too much, confront the issue in a caring way. Share your concern and why you are worried, using "I" statements ("I'm concerned that you put off your papers until the night before they're due because I know you're probably not able to do your best work that way."). Let her know that you believe in her talents and her intelligence. And suggest that he visit one of the following campus resources for assistance:

- ✓ his academic advisor
- ✓ the learning center
- ✓ the counseling center
- ✓ the academic learning lab

These good folks are there to help and have motivated many students to get their procrastination under control. Students who face their procrastinating tendencies now will develop healthier lifelong habits, sooner rather than later.

Sources: "Ending Procrastination," *Psychology Today*, Oct. 28, 2003; "Procrastination and Time Management," *University of Oregon Counseling and Testing Center*, <http://darkwing.oregon.edu/~counsel/procrastination.htm>

Excuses, Excuses...

Do any of these sound familiar?

- "I'm not feeling well."
- "I'm not in the right mood."
- "I do my best work when I'm under pressure."
- "This is too hard."

If you're hearing these excuses over and over, it could be time to confront your student in a caring yet firm manner. She may need help recognizing her procrastination patterns.