



Working Remotely: Tip of the Week

May 3, 2021

Stop Procrastinating

It's May, and with it arrives spring flowers, Mother's Day and... final exams, grading papers, last-minute tutoring, frazzled demands for library resources, all leading to commencement. May is a time when our procrastination catches us. To avoid the accompanying stress of procrastination, start practicing the following tips:

1. **Make an appointment with yourself.** When you are accountable to someone else, i.e., your boss, co-worker, loved one, you make good on your commitment. However, it is common to frequently push your commitment to yourself aside due to competing demands, or you aren't in the mood. Stop this behavior. Hold yourself accountable to keep your commitments. Make an appointment to get that task done and honor that time just as if you were meeting with someone else. When you do, you will not face the dread of the deadline.
2. **Stop before you're done.** When you have a big task, break it into units, either by time or component parts. When you get that first unit done, stop. It will help you look forward to jumping back into the task.
3. **Create satisfying episodes.** Some tasks are hard to enjoy. We often beat ourselves up for not completing them as a result. Instead, think of yourself as a limited resource and ask yourself how you can maximize your time, energy, and motivation. One answer is to focus on a portion of the task that would be meaningful, satisfying, and motivate you to pursue it further. It may be to gather the base information and resources you need to begin the task, or it can be as simple as listing all the tasks you need to do. Maximize your satisfaction.
4. **Feel the endorphins.** When you complete a task—even the one portion—take a moment to savor the good feeling your endorphins produce. Feel the earned satisfaction from getting work finished. Doing so creates new neural connections that associate productivity with pleasure rather than resentment.
5. **Use the power of capturing your thoughts.** Instead of trying to remember all your tasks in your head, capture them outside of your brain. It may be as simple as writing them on paper or more digital as entering them into a task management app on your smartphone. Your mind is for having ideas, not holding them.

6. **Reward and renew yourself.** It is easy to lose enthusiasm for being efficient and productive. There is always more to do, and it is a relentless grind. Don't burn yourself out. Make reasonable commitments to get things done and allow time for relaxation and renewal between projects. Treat yourself as you would someone you work with or a loved one: give praise and encouragement for the great work you get done.

Procrastination is not insurmountable. Find ways to influence yourself and make being productive a joy rather than a misery.

This tip is influenced by Crucial Skills Newsletter, "Five Tips for Overcoming Procrastination," Joseph Grenny, March 17, 2021.

For more Tips on working remotely, please visit <https://bit.ly/mc-remote-working-e> and watch for the next tip on May 17, 2021.

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