

# WELLBEING GUIDE

## to stopping procrastination



# Procrastination

## What is Procrastination?

*Procrastination is the action of unnecessarily and involuntarily delaying or postponing something despite knowing that there will be negative consequences for doing so.*

*Sometimes procrastination is linked to perfectionism. If you cannot see a perfect way to do something, you will struggle to even start the task. However, procrastination is not always linked to perfectionism. It can also be an act of rebellion - 'nobody can tell me what to do'. Others procrastinate as they don't want to appear too successful, or they think being seen trying hard is unattractive.*

*Some people have longstanding issues with concentration such as ADHD/ADD. In these instances other support may be needed.*

## **Causes**

A big issue with completing a task is feeling motivated to do it. If we are not interested in the project it can result in lack of incentive. Similarly, the task may feel overwhelming and so we feel unable to tackle it. This makes the task undesirable.

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## **Common stories/excuses to justify procrastination**

Whatever the cause, there are common stories/excuses that may surface to justify procrastination:

- ✓ I need to do more research before I can start...
- ✓ I work best under last minute pressure...
- ✓ Research is interesting, writing up is boring...
- ✓ I must text my friend/tidy up my room etc. before I get started...
- ✓ I've been disturbed by ... and lost my momentum and I can't get it back...
- ✓ I've made a good start, that's enough for one day...

**A little procrastination from time to time is inevitable. Energy levels and motivation ebb and flow.**

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## What might help when procrastination is prolonged or getting in your way?

- ✓ Forgive yourself for procrastination in the past, try to be more positive about yourself.
- ✓ If your procrastination is linked with perfectionism, acknowledge the connection – the fear you feel around starting a project that may not turn out perfectly.
- ✓ Take a step back, soothe this anxiety and tell yourself that you don't need to be so careful. There is no disaster waiting to happen. If you don't understand some aspect of the task, there is nothing wrong with asking for help along the way.
- ✓ Instead of dwelling on why a task is difficult/boring/pointless put your energy into thinking how you can do it, breaking it down into manageable parts.
- ✓ Working on your general study skills such as time management, writing essays and presentations will boost your confidence and make the task seem less daunting.
- ✓ Do small chunks regularly, to break up the task. Plan into a calendar so that you are not overwhelmed.

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## Top tips to beat procrastination

- ✓ Ask someone to check in on your progress.
- ✓ Minimise your distractions. Turn off your email, phone/social media and avoid TV.
- ✓ Keep a to-do list and cross off as you go along.
- ✓ Prioritise the to-do-list and get the hardest parts done first. Tell yourself to commit to only doing 5 minutes of work when you are avoiding a task. Chances are you will do way more once you start.
- ✓ Establish a healthy reward system for completing any task.
- ✓ Be realistic. Most people catastrophise believing something will be too difficult, painful or boring to do. Reality is that boring will not kill you, but the stress of procrastinating can make you feel sick or exhausted! The trick is to start or resume a task, even the first 10 minutes will make you feel much less stressed, than doing nothing at all.

Use this space to write what you going to try to overcome your procrastination.

A large, empty white rounded rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for writing a response to the prompt above. It occupies the majority of the page's vertical space.

## Further help and support:

- **Centre for Clinical Interventions**
  - [cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources/looking-after-yourself/perfectionism](https://cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources/looking-after-yourself/perfectionism)
- **Anxiety UK**
  - The national charity for people with anxiety has an excellent website with lots of useful information and a helpline. Student membership gets you access to multiple resources.
  - [anxietyuk.org.uk](https://anxietyuk.org.uk)
- **Danny Penman: resources**
  - [franticworld.com/what-is-mindfulness](https://franticworld.com/what-is-mindfulness)
- **The Gifts of Imperfection, Brené Brown (2020)**
  - [brenebrown.com/book/the-gifts-of-imperfection](https://brenebrown.com/book/the-gifts-of-imperfection)
- **Self-Compassion – Dr. Kristin Neff**
  - [self-compassion.org/category/exercises](https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises)
- **Our Life Tools programme**
  - [blogs.reading.ac.uk/life-tools-programme](https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/life-tools-programme)