**Procrastination**

**Procrastination is when we put important things off in favour of less important or unimportant ones. The important tasks that we put off are usually difficult or unpleasant. Procrastination can be the occasional avoidance of people, situations with little or no negative effect. However, procrastination can have a very damaging effect on their academic, occupational and social lives. For these people, procrastination is a very serious, anxiety-provoking problem. *Procrastination can be managed.***

**Why we procrastinate and when it might sometimes be okay to do so:**

* Perfectionism – effects one or more important areas, but not all
* *NUI Galway Student Counselling Service asks students about..Perfectionism*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bq6QKijC-rs>

* Fear of looking foolish or making mistakes, or of committing to a decision I may later regret
* Difficult tasks – not enough information, potentially dangerous, complicated, we may be new to the task
* Unpleasant – asking for yet again for another…, admitting a mistake, pointing out the mistakes of others
* Not realising the importance of the task
* Negative self-talk: ‘should’, ‘have to’, ‘must’.
* Tiredness, hunger, cold, other physical things, illness
* Trying to do too much, or to do too much for others, or both. Sometimes it’s hard to say ‘NO’

Tips to avoid procrastination:

* Do difficult tasks when you are the most fresh.
* A common excuse is ‘I work better under pressure’, so create pressure. Create deadlines, and put them in your diary. Tell people you plan to get something done, and then they’ll ask if you got it done.
* Just do it! Sometimes just doing something creates the mood and builds momentum to continue, so decide to just do something, anything to get going.
* Spend five minutes on a task. Once you get started you may find you’ll keep going.
* Do something related; also known as the back door approach! For example, if you have to start a project or essay make a plan to go talk to someone about it. This may lead you to the library because they suggest a reference. Often it can be easier to talk to someone than to sit down and write.
* Keep motivated by writing down your personal goals and posting them around your space where you can see them on a regular basis.
* *NUI Galway Student Counselling Service asks students about..Procrastination* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WM9r1R9doM>

**Do something on your list of activities you are in the mood to do:**

* Give yourself a pep talk. Remind yourself of the benefits of getting the task done and the consequences of failing to do it now. Remind yourself of the emotional and physical consequences of procrastination.
* Surround yourself physically with items associated with the task. Keep your study space organized. Make sure your environment encourages you to study (limited distractions, things you need to hand).
* Make your tasks visible – set up reminders, signs, lists, notes all around you.
* Leave something definite to go back to when you finish studying – this helps to avoid pre-study fidgeting and things to distract you.

**Use rewards**

* Promise yourself something you enjoy after doing a task you’ve been putting off. For example, work for 20 minutes on economics then going for a coffee instead of the other way around. Also reward yourself at milestones along the way.
* Avoid self-defeating, avoidance generating beliefs and statements that tend to encourage procrastination. Such as thinking you’re not good enough or that everyone else is doing a better job or that you’ll never get it all done. Instead, use enabling and positive beliefs and attitudes.
* Get help from other people and use your friends.
* Visualize or rehearse in your imagination completing the task.

***Final words of advice:***

* Don’t worry about making mistakes. You will. You are human. You only find out what works by trying different approaches.
* Manage your time. Start early so you have time to procrastinate.
* Don’t allow yourself to make a split-second decision to put if off yet again. Slow the decision-making process to consider the importance of the task and the consequences of a delay.
* Working under pressure may sacrifice accuracy, damage relationships, and put your body under undue stress.

**Excerpts taken from James McCormack ‘Procrastination Workshop’, NUI Galway, 2016**

****