Procrastination

Putting things off — we all do it, but for some college students, procrastination is a very serious problem. As a result of putting things off, we often feel guilty, lazy, inadequate or stupid, none of which is conducive to good performance. If you find you are constantly turning in assignments late and have a hard time motivating yourself to get started with studying or projects, you may have a serious procrastination problem. For someone who does have a procrastination problem, it is extremely important to set up a time management plan. Designing a good time management program and then sticking to it can be very effective in overcoming procrastination. However, time management is very difficult for a lot of college students, especially those who tend to procrastinate.

Possible reasons for procrastination:

Lack of relevance — if you are not interested in the project you may find it easy to postpone starting it.

Fear of the unknown — being uncertain about your skills for a project can make it difficult to begin.

Perfectionism — some students set such high standards for themselves that it is very difficult to begin because the goals they set are unattainable.

Anxiety about evaluation — sometimes students are so worried about how they will be evaluated that the anxiety interferes with their ability to accomplish the task.

Some suggestions for coping with procrastination:

Note how you procrastinate: Do you underestimate the time needed to complete a task successfully or overestimate your ability; do you substitute one "worthy activity" for another, thus avoiding the task at hand; do you persevere on only one portion of a project or do you find deciding between alternative choices paralyzing; do you convince yourself that a mediocre performance is acceptable, and do you allow distractions (friends, telephone calls, etc.) to control your study time? Understanding how you procrastinate is the first step to doing something about it.

Note what your procrastination is doing to the attainment of career or personal goals. Break big projects down into smaller segments. Make a list of each segment to be accomplished and then cross off each as it is completed.

Write an intention statement where you not only set some goals for your project, but you identify a reward for when those goals are accomplished. After you have written your intention, tell someone close to you about it. One very effective way to combat procrastination is to make yourself accountable to someone whose approval you respect.

Make yourself accountable to the person who will be evaluating you. Set up a time to have your professor go over your outline or your opening paragraph. Make these appointments well before the paper/project is due.

Be reasonable about what you can accomplish, and remember to schedule relaxation time as well as task time. This helps you to feel less resentful of the task.

Visit Academic Support Services. Resources are available to help with procrastination. Remember that if your procrastination problem is interfering seriously with your self-confidence, your ability to sleep, or your academic performance, you should talk with counseling services.