

Introduction

PROCRASTINATION

Any opportunity to do something is also an opportunity not to do it.

—Eli Josel

Let's get something out of the way right away. Everyone procrastinates. All the kids are doing it! So take some comfort in the fact that you're not alone.

One 2014 study found that a whopping 80 to 95 percent of college students procrastinated on a regular basis, particularly when completing assignments and coursework. And their high school counterparts? Not that far behind. Research—and there is a lot—shows that all this procrastinating makes you feel stressed and anxious and negatively impacts your grades.

So with all that said, why the heck do you do it? Why is it so difficult to activate or stay motivated when the consequences you're suffering are so negative?

As an academic/life coach for teens and college students for the past fifteen years, not a day goes by where I am not coaching, emailing or working with a student on overcoming their procrastination.

Here are a few insights I've gained along the way:

For some of you, the act of getting started is just too difficult and overwhelming. What you want to accomplish feels too big or vague.

For others, it's the lack of structure or immediacy. Without a

schedule or deadline, you just can't muster enough energy to start . . . or finish.

Some tasks seem boring, mind-numbing or wastes of time. For some, you just don't give a crap. (Your words, not mine.)

Some of you lack a *time sense*, an ability to know how long it takes to get something done. I've heard too many stories from students starting to work on a six-page research paper two hours before it's due.

Some of you simply don't know how to study and therefore don't.

For others, the fear of failure, disapproval or imperfection stops you right in your tracks.

And then there are those of you who can't keep the distractions at bay. (You know who you are!)

As you can see, I've heard and seen it all! And I've read and researched a ton on this topic. What I've come to learn is that procrastination, especially why we do it, is multilayered and complex. It's not as simple as believing that it's a deep character flaw or that you're just lazy. If it only were that simple!

Let me explain.

Procrastinating doesn't necessarily make you a procrastinator. Think about it. We all put things off from time to time. We all waste time. Heck, we also don't always finish what we started. And sometimes it's not horrible or detrimental to our well-being. And it all works out in the end. Feel better?

Not all procrastination looks the same. There is a huge difference between delaying doing something until the very last minute and still getting it done vs not doing it at all and suffering the consequences for it.

Students procrastinate (for the most part) for different reasons than adults do. I know you're angry and tired of being told what to do. All. The. Time. You feel powerless and you'd like some control.

Just because you procrastinate doesn't mean you're lazy. (OK, maybe sometimes. But aren't we all?) Or stupid. Or weak. And you're



Classroom Confessionals

What's the strangest place you've ever studied?

"I run through vocabulary or flash cards while I'm in the bathroom."

—Jeremy, college freshman

definitely not hopeless. No matter what anyone has told you. (And I know you've heard them all, so I feel for you on this point.)

Different types of procrastination need different tools to help manage them. (More on that as we dive deeper into the book.)

You can be a functional procrastinator. Yes, there is such a thing. Or at least I think so.

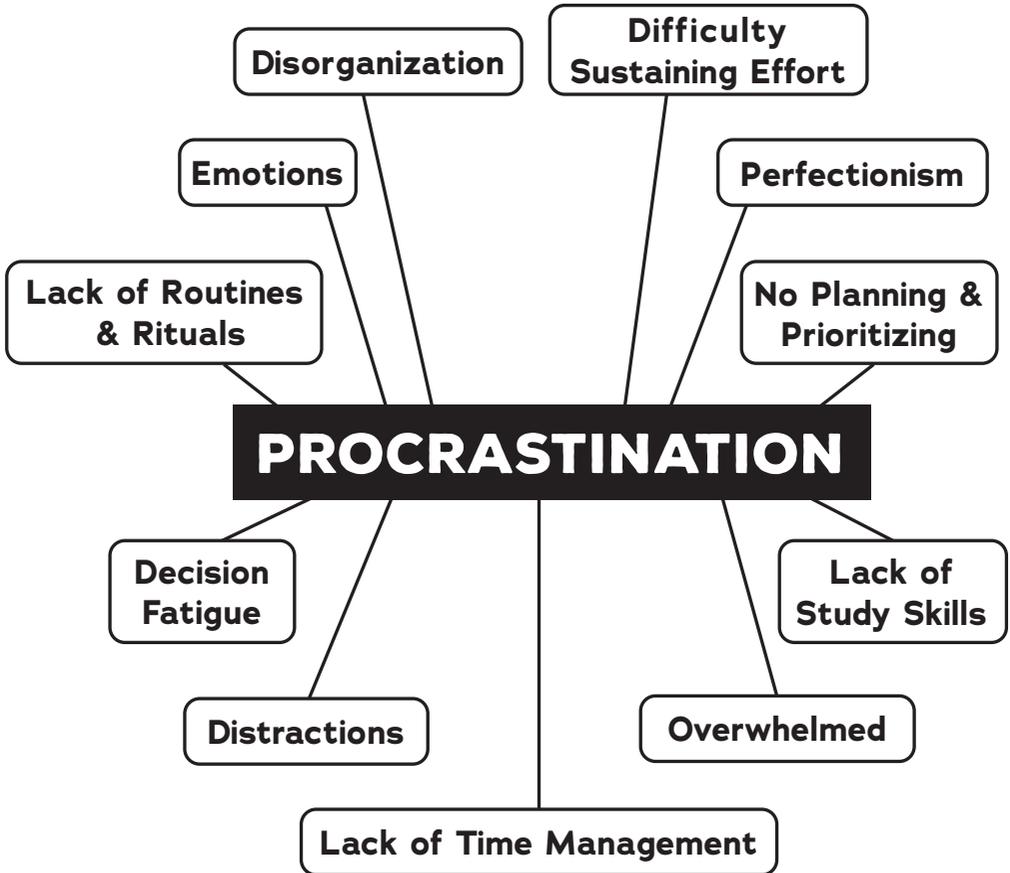
For some of you, waiting until the last minute works. It gets you activated and stops you from all that waffling back and forth. You stay uberfocused, get done what you need to get done and feel your creative juices flowing freely. It simply works for you.

I don't believe that you can "cure" your procrastination.

What I do believe is that with the right tools and strategies, you can absolutely learn to manage it. (This is where my expertise comes in handy!)

We don't always realize what is getting in our way, or worse, we assume our roadblocks are something they're not. In my experience, the key to managing your procrastination is to truly understand why you do it in the first place. That's not easy, I know. I can throw all kinds of tips, tools, strategies and systems at you to combat your procrastination, but none of them will be truly effective until you understand your roadblocks.

Take a look at the following diagram. I'm thinking you'll recognize some of these categories. They are some of the more common reasons you procrastinate. As we move through the book, we're going to take a deeper dive into each one. By doing so, I hope you'll develop a clearer understanding of what's getting in your way,



have a few “aha” moments as you recognize yourself in my students’ stories and collect an arsenal of tools for getting down to business.

I also promise to keep it real. Offer no judgment. And make things as easy to understand as possible.

In other words, I’m going to show you how to do it now.