

techniques (continued)

6. **“Swiss Cheese” Method.** Do anything at all that is connected to the task you want to accomplish. Gradually eat large chunks or holes in the task.
7. **Self-reward.** Reward yourself with something pleasant when you have finished any difficult or onerous task.
8. **Self-punishment.** Penalize yourself by depriving yourself of something you like, or forcing yourself to do something you don't like, until you finish the task.
9. **Stimulus Control.** Make as many changes in your environment as necessary to remove distractions, ensure privacy, become neater, and have important materials on hand.
10. **Anticipate Backsliding.** Under stress we tend to revert back to old patterns of behavior. Recognize that this is not a disaster and continue practicing the above techniques.

Overcoming the habit of procrastination requires awareness of self-defeating and erroneous beliefs about the difficulties of tasks and about our lack of ability to accomplish them.

Help is available

Aspirus Employee Assistance Services has counselors available to help you and your family. You can call the confidential helpline 24 hours a day at:

715.848.4357 ~ 800.236.4457
TDD# 715.845.4928

**Remember,
Aspirus Employee
Assistance Services
is confidential.**



ASPIRUS™
EMPLOYEE
ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Passion for excellence. Compassion for people.

3000 Westhill Drive, Suite 100
Wausau, WI 54401

715.847.2772
aspirus.org

Procrastination



techniques for overcoming
the problem



ASPIRUS™
EMPLOYEE
ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Passion for excellence. Compassion for people.

procrastination

Each of us, at times, puts off tasks until tomorrow and when tomorrow comes, we put them off until the next tomorrow. We hope that somehow, magically, the avoided task will get done. In the meantime, we may experience guilt, self-criticism, and feelings of hopelessness. If this is a common experience in your life, you may be trapped in a cycle of procrastination.

Most procrastinators understand the many ways that delaying tactics work against them. But, procrastinators also get some payoffs for delaying tasks, such as avoiding the fear of failure or the fear of success, or as a way of resisting authority. Despite these payoffs, life would likely be much more pleasurable for most people without the baggage of long-undone tasks.

Procrastinators often hold two major irrational beliefs:

1. They view themselves as inadequate.
2. They view the world as too demanding and difficult.

As a result of these beliefs, almost any project can feel overwhelming and will be avoided so as to not risk the anticipated failure. If one also believes tasks must be completed to a high level of perfection, the feeling of being overwhelmed is greatly increased and, as a result, so is the tendency to procrastinate.

resistance to overcoming procrastination

There are some common mechanisms procrastinators sometimes use to continue procrastinating. These include:

1. Rationalization

- “I’ll start tomorrow when I’ll have more time (information, energy, quiet, enthusiasm, help).”
- “I work better under pressure.”
- “Pleasure delayed is pleasure lost.”

2. Impulsiveness

- Low frustration tolerance may result in giving up or searching for short cuts.

3. Escapism

- Daydreaming, watching television, reading, sleeping, eating, cleaning, shopping, exercising - any diversion to relieve the anxiety.

techniques for overcoming procrastination

Some simple strategies to help stop procrastination include:

1. **Begin Now.** Don’t wait for a moment of inspiration. It is better to begin the task even if you are not inspired. It is more likely that you will become inspired in the act of doing something than in thinking about doing it. Even if inspiration never comes, at least the job will be done.
2. **Small Sequential Steps.** Break the task down into smaller, manageable parts and set yourself the goal of doing a small step by a specific deadline. Once you have finished one step, do the next one.
3. **Five-minute Plan.** Take a task you’ve been procrastinating at and work a minimum of 5 minutes on it. Once you’ve finished 5 minutes, then you can choose to set yourself another 5 minutes, and then another.
4. **“Worst First” Approach.** Identify the most difficult part of the task and do it first.
5. **“Remembering.”** Whenever you remember a task you keep forgetting to do, do it, or at least some of it, immediately.