Procrastination

Alice,

I'm a horrible procrastinator and time manager ? in school, at work, cleaning my apartment, you name it, I'm somehow always putting it off until tomorrow, or taking forever to finish. Predictably, I keep missing the procrastination workshops offered at my school. Do you have any practical suggestions on time organization and overcoming procrastination habits?

? Always Late

Answer

Dear Always Late,

An inordinate amount of stress in students' lives revolves around time, and procrastination is probably the number one time management problem of all! Procrastination can be a mask for our own unrealistic perfectionist tendencies, self-doubt, or fear of change. It can also simply be a result of poor time management and ineffective study skills.

With patience and determination, you can change some of your procrastinating tendencies. Here are a few time management strategies:

- Be realistic about what you can accomplish in a day ? prioritize two or three major goals or to-do's each day, leaving other activities "lower down" on your list.
- Schedule your activities for peak efficiency. Do the things that require more brain power during the times of the day when your energy level is highest.
- Divide your projects into small pieces. The job at hand can then become more manageable, and your steady progress might encourage you to move ahead.
- Create an environment in which your productivity can be maximized. This may mean finding a place with minimal distractions, like a quiet study room in the library.
- Create a schedule that allows flexibility for unanticipated events (e.g., distractions, computer crashes). Remember to leave a 15 percent tip ? add extra time into your schedule for each activity because things always seem to take longer than you think.
- Forgive yourself if you don't complete all of the things on your to-do list ? you're only human.
Identifying the reason why you procrastinate may help you kick the habit. Think about your feelings towards the task at hand. What will happen if you fail/succeed? Are you putting it off because of lack of interest and boredom? What will happen once the project is complete?

Procrastination can lead to stress, but stress can also cause procrastination. For some tips on minimizing stress, check out Stress at the start of school [2] in the Go Ask Alice! Emotional Health [3] archive. You might also see if you can speak with a counselor at your campus’ student health center to discuss your procrastination habits in detail.

By the way, taking the time to write your question means that you did not procrastinate on one thing! This is a great first step towards managing your procrastination habit. Keep up the good work!

Alice!
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