

Dismissing Procrastination Excuses

What are Procrastination Excuses?

Procrastination excuses usually involve some grain of truth about the current situation we are facing, from which we conclude we are better off postponing a task or goal to another time. These excuses make us feel that our procrastination is justified, reasonable, acceptable and OK. As such, these excuses play a big role in leading us to procrastinate, and we need to learn how to dismiss them. Here are some common procrastination excuses. Each excuse is divided into 2 parts, the grain of truth and its unhelpful conclusion.

The Truth	The Unhelpful Conclusion
I am really tired	I am better off doing it after I have rested
I will miss out on the fun happening now	I can always wait till nothing much is happening
I don't have everything I need	I will wait till I do
I have plenty of time	So I don't have to start it now
I have other things to do	I will do it once those things are finished

These unhelpful conclusions follow the unrealistic notion that tomorrow will somehow miraculously be a better time to get productive and follow through with

things. However, often if we wait for a time when we feel rested, motivated, inspired, have no distractions, have everything we possibly need, have heaps of time, have finished all the other things that we could possibly be doing...we will be waiting a very long time for just the right conditions to come together to get started on a task or goal. The real truth is that no time is probably ideal for doing something we don't feel like doing, hence now is just as good as any other time to get cracking. Often if we get started and take a step forward towards completing our task or goal, no matter how small the step, our desire to do that task or goal often increases, and we can get some valuable things done. This means that by taking action first, all the other things often fall into place for us and we feel capable of continuing forward and getting the job done.

Challenging Your Conclusions

You can challenge your unhelpful conclusions and develop more helpful conclusions by asking yourself:

- What is the factual evidence or reasons that it is better for me to put off this task or goal?
- What is the factual evidence or reasons that it is better for me to start this task or goal now?
- Is it really true that I will be better off in the long run delaying this task or goal?

- Is it really true that I can't make even a small start on the task or goal right now?
- Can I still get some parts of the task or goal done now, even though conditions aren't ideal?
- Is it really true that later is a better time to do it?
- If I do make some start on the task or goal right now – What might happen? How might I feel?
- If I don't make a start on the task or goal right now – What might happen?
- How might I feel?

The Truth	The Helpful Conclusion
I am really tired	But I can still make a small start right now
I will miss out on the fun happening now	But if I get some of it done, I can reward myself with other fun later
I don't have everything I need	But I can still try to make a start on some bits of the task
I have plenty of time	But better to get on top of it now than leave it to the last minute
I have other things to do	But they are not more important and can be done after this

Another way to change your unhelpful conclusions is to test them. That is, conduct an experiment to see if what you predict about your ability to complete tasks under certain circumstances, really holds up in reality.

For example, if your excuses relate to the notion that you can't do it now because you are too fatigued, first rate how fatigued you are (0-10), then spend 5 or 10mins doing the task.

Following this re-rate your fatigue and examine what you were able to achieve in that short time. You may then continue for another short amount of time, and again re-evaluate your fatigue and what you got done. Often this experiment shows you can get something done, and you actually feel more energised.

Encourage Rather Than Criticise

The more you criticise yourself for procrastinating, the more demotivated you feel, and the more likely you will continue to procrastinate. As such, turning self-criticism into more motivational self-talk, can also help to overcome procrastination. The best way to encourage and motivate yourself, is to speak to yourself as you would a friend who was in the same situation, as we tend to be encouraging rather than critical to others.