

The Vicious Cycle of Procrastination

The Procrastination Cycle Procrastination arises from our unhelpful rules and assumptions about what we expect of ourselves and the world. When these are activated, they lead us to feel (or detect) some sort of discomfort about doing a task or goal we are faced with. If we can't tolerate this discomfort (that is, we detest the feeling), we will be likely to use procrastination as our way of avoiding or dodging the discomfort.

In addition, if we can come up with convincing excuses and justifications for our procrastination, we will be all the more likely to travel the path of procrastination. As such we will engage in procrastination activities, such as doing pleasurable or distracting things, as a substitute for the tasks and goals we need to be doing. In turn, the consequences that arise from our procrastination, whether they be positive or negative, make us more likely to turn to procrastination next time we are faced with a similar task or goal. This happens because we got both a pay-off for our procrastination, as well as made the task even more aversive by putting it off.

Approach Task/Goal

Unhelpful Rules/Assumptions

Activated Need To Be In Charge; Pleasure Seeking; Fear Of Failure Or Disapproval; Fear Of Uncertainty Or Catastrophe; Low Self-Confidence; Depleted Energy

Discomfort Driven

Detect Discomfort from the task/goal Detest the feeling of Discomfort Urge to Dodge the Discomfort builds + Procrastination Excuses

Procrastination Activities

Consequences

Positive & Negative

Continue To Procrastinate Next Time

(New) Approach Task/Goal

Old Unhelpful Rules/Assumptions Activated

(Intsead!!!)

Adjust Unhelpful Rules & Assumptions

+

Tolerate Discomfort

+

Dismiss Procrastination Excuses & Encourage Yourself

Apply Practical Strategies To Stop Procrastination

Consequences

Things get done!!!

Sense of achievement, satisfaction, self-belief

Less discomfort & stress

Reward Unhelpful rules/assumptions are challenged

Continue To Do Rather Than Procrastinate Next Time

The Procrastination Cycle shows us that procrastination is like a vicious negative spiral that we get stuck in. The good thing about a cycle, is that usually we can reverse it from a negative cycle to a more positive cycle. The more positive Doing Cycle shows us that when faced with a task or goal you would usually procrastinate over, you need to:

- Adjust your unhelpful rules and assumptions;
- Tolerate your discomfort;
- Dismiss your procrastination excuses;
- Be motivational towards yourself rather than critical; and
- Put into action practical strategies to stop procrastinating.

It is important to realise that procrastination is a habit, and like any habit it will take time, practice, persistence and patience to change from 'procrastinator' to 'doer'.