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WHAT IS PROCRASTINATION

Procrastination Defined 📌

> **Procrastination is the act of repeatedly deferring or delaying tasks to one's detriment, despite knowing there will be negative consequences.** – Russ Ramsey

Understanding Procrastination 🤔

Most people mistakenly label procrastination as simply "bad behavior," attributing it to laziness or a lack of discipline. But even this widely accepted definition overlooks two critical points:

- **WHY** procrastination is happening in the first place.
- **HOW** to effectively manage or overcome it.

If you're a woman struggling with procrastination, it's likely your assumptions about WHY you procrastinate are entirely off the mark. Understanding the true reasons behind procrastination, particularly as they relate to women's experiences, is the first powerful step toward meaningful change.

Reflect:

When you try to solve your procrastination, the way you frame the problem, influence the solutions you come up with?

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Making Assumptions about Procrastination

Many people assume they know why procrastination happens. But often, their assumptions are **wrong**.

Procrastination Is Not One-Size-Fits-All

- There isn't a single reason why people procrastinate.
- The cause can vary from **person to person** and even **situation to situation**—which makes finding the right solution tricky.

Why Assumptions Matter 🛠️

The way you approach overcoming procrastination depends on what you believe is causing it. If your assumption is incorrect:

- You might use strategies that don’t actually help.
- You could end up feeling even worse about yourself when those strategies fail.

The Power of Self-Awareness 🌟

Understanding Your Behavior: Instead of defaulting to the wrong explanation, self-awareness helps us explore the **real** reasons behind procrastination.

Finding Effective Solutions: Once we know the root cause, we can use strategies that actually work—rather than wasting energy on "quick fixes" that fail.

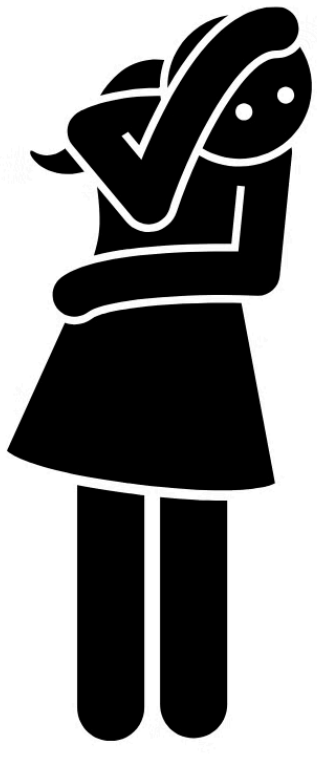
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The Risks of Quick Fixes & Misdiagnosing Procrastination 💔

If you assume the wrong reason for your procrastination, it can lead to harm.

How?

- It reinforces negative beliefs about yourself ("I'm lazy," "I have no willpower").



- It leads to ineffective solutions, which don't solve the problem.
- This can create a **cycle of shame, failure, and self-criticism**.

The Bottom Line: Procrastination is complex, and the key to managing it isn't **trying harder**—it's **understanding yourself better**.

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THE EMOTIONAL CYCLE OF PROCRASTINATION

For women with ADHD, emotions play a huge role in procrastination. Many people don’t realize that emotional regulation—how we manage our feelings—is a big part of ADHD, even though it’s not officially included in the diagnostic criteria. Let’s break it down with a common cycle:

The ADHD Procrastination Cycle:

1. **A Hard Task Appears** – You come across a task that feels overwhelming. Maybe it's because of past struggles, the difficulty of the task itself, or doubts about your ability to handle it.
2. **Big Emotions Kick In** – Thinking about the task makes you anxious, frustrated, or even scared. Managing these emotions feels difficult.
3. **Avoidance Feels Easier** – To escape these uncomfortable feelings, you put off the task. Maybe you distract yourself or convince yourself you’ll do it later.
4. **Temporary Relief** – Avoiding the task makes you feel better—for now. This reinforces the habit of avoiding things when they feel overwhelming.
5. **The Problem Grows** – Tasks pile up, stress builds, and eventually, there’s a crisis. Guilt and anxiety increase, making it even harder to start.
6. **Self-Doubt Increases** – The more this cycle repeats, the more you start believing negative things about yourself, like "I'm lazy" or "I can't handle hard things."
7. **The Cycle Repeats** – Next time a tough task comes up, your brain remembers that avoiding it gave you short-term relief, so you procrastinate again.

The Big Picture:

Procrastination isn’t just about laziness—it’s an emotional coping mechanism. Avoiding tasks brings short-term relief, but in the long run, it adds more stress and reinforces negative self-beliefs. Understanding this cycle is the first step to breaking free from it!

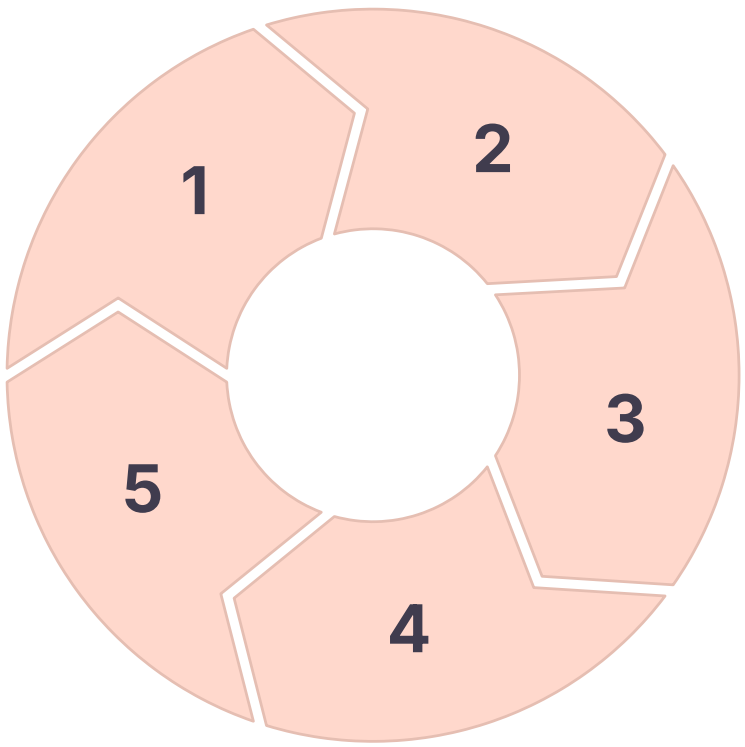
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The Emotional Cycle of Procrastination

Once you have an understanding of the emotional cycle, you can practice other skills to help yourself with your emotions besides avoidance.

1. Task

Challenging, Boring or Overwhelming



2. Emotions

Anxiety, Fear, Frustration

3. Avoidance

Procrastinate to escape emotions

4. Short Term Relief

More Likely to Occur

5. Long Term Consequences

Avoided tasks pile up, leading to increased stress, guilt, and anxiety

The cycle is influenced by executive functioning, past experiences, and self-perception, creating a continuous loop of procrastination. This cycle makes perfect sense as a way to protect yourself. Once you understand it, you can practice new skills to help yourself when you want or need to do things.

The Maladaptive Coping Cycle: A Model for Understanding Academic and Social Failure in Children with ADHD

Martha L. Wise, Barbara L. Wise, and Sarah R. Jones

The ADHD Report201927:7,1-9,12

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Why did we wait so long to cover procrastination?

Why Did We Wait So Long to Talk About Procrastination?

Procrastination isn't about laziness or lack of effort. Instead, it's often a sign that **something isn't working**—whether that's a mismatch between the task and how your brain functions, emotional resistance, or a lack of the right strategies and support.

🌟 Key Insights:

- **Procrastination is a symptom, not the problem.** It often signals a missing skill, an unmet need, or a system that doesn't fit your brain.
- **Skill Building Matters:** The challenge isn't just avoiding tasks—it's about **learning how to approach them in ways that work for your ADHD** and recognizing what your nervous system needs.
- **Beyond "Trying Harder":** Willpower alone won't break the cycle. Real change comes from **building strategies, making accommodations, and shifting self-critical thoughts.**



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Empowerment Tools

Self-Advocacy

Champion for your distinct needs and knowing what your rights are.

Self-Compassion

Extend kindness and understanding to yourself.

Self-Care

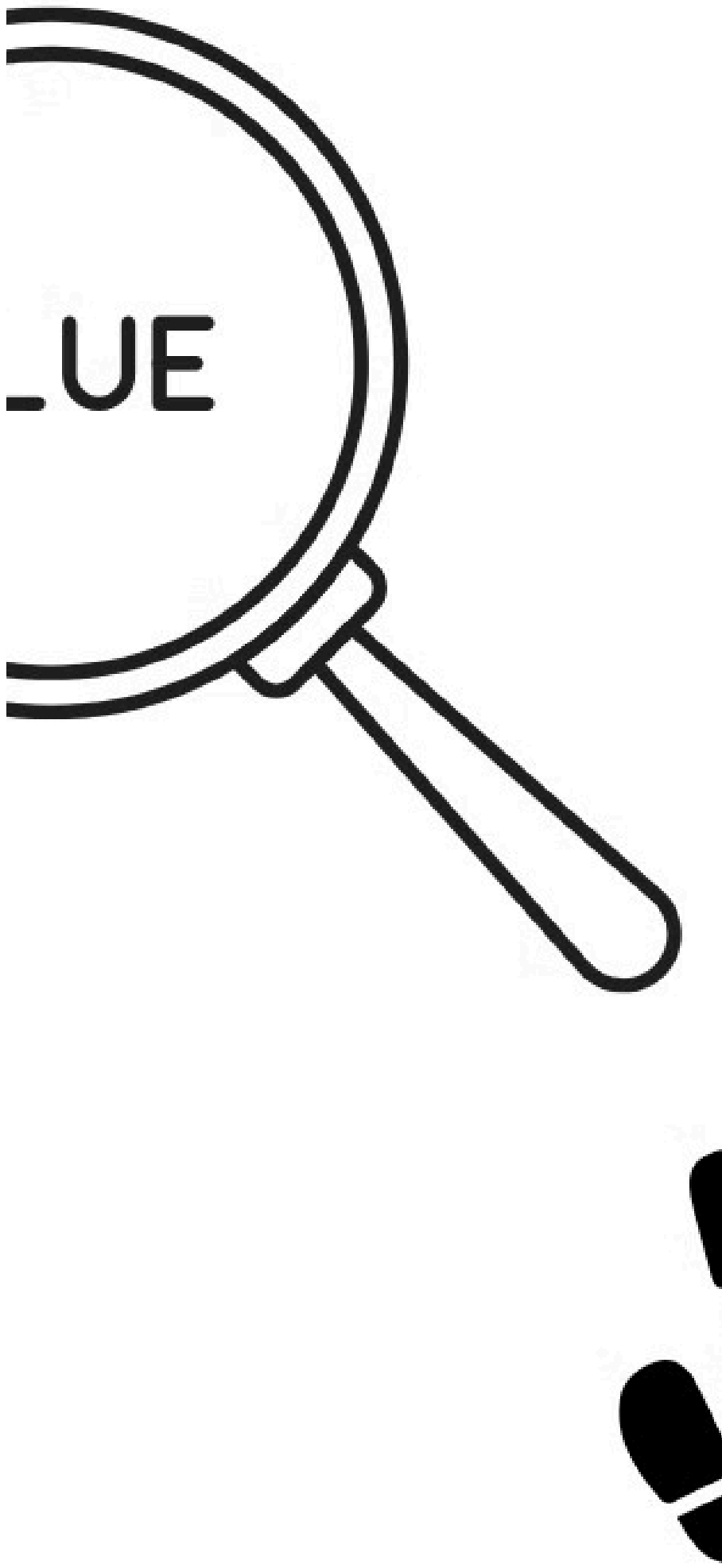
Actively prioritize actions that put your well-being first.

Self-Accommodations

Tailor your environment to better suit your ADHD and knowing that you deserve accommodations.

Self-Awareness

Recognize there are alternative solutions, different from the mainstream advice you might have received.



Procrastination is a clue to be deciphered.

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3 Reasons Why Procrastination is Worse for ADHD Women

Procrastination is complex and influenced by many factors. For ADHD women, three key reasons make it even more challenging: thinking patterns, emotions, and environment. Let’s break them down.

Executive Function Challenges

ADHD women often struggle with executive functioning, making it harder to plan, start, and complete tasks. The pressure to juggle multiple roles only adds to this, leading to overwhelm and procrastination.

Impact of Late Diagnosis

Deep-seated beliefs of feeling 'different' or 'inadequate' intensify the emotional spiral of procrastination.

Perfectionism-Procrastination Paradox

Perfectionism is common among ADHD women and often fuels procrastination. The fear of making mistakes or being judged can feel so overwhelming that it prevents starting the task altogether.Reflect:

As you ponder these points, identify which resonates deeply with you?

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Mindful Self Compassion for Procrastination

Common Humanity

Understanding that you have faced these obstacles along with other women in our group can help you be self compassionate towards yourself when faced with procrastination.

Curiosity

You're probably eager for solutions to procrastination, as it can complicate parts of your life.

Before we delve into solutions, keep this in mind: Procrastination isn't always negative. Sometimes, it's our mind's way of protecting us.

Being curious about each particular flavor of procrastination and listening to what the procrastination can teach you about what you need is a good way to approach it.

This can help you determine the WHY of procrastination. Then we can begin to discover the HOW of moving through it.

We do this with MINDFUL SELF COMPASSION and SELF AWARENESS.

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Mindful Self-Compassion for Procrastination

1 Pause and Reflect

When the impulse to procrastinate arises or difficult feelings show up, pause and use mindfulness to observe what's happening internally.

2 Normalize the Feeling

Remind yourself using the principle of common humanity that many people feel this way, especially when faced with challenging, or overwhelming tasks. It's a human experience. Say this to yourself out loud. "Many women with adhd struggle with procrastination, I am not alone with this issue."

3 Respond with Kindness

Instead of spiraling into negative self-talk, employ self-kindness. Offer words of kindness to yourself. "I am doing the best I can, and I am learning new skills." or ", you are doing the best you can here, and you are trying to learn a new skill with your procrastination." (distanced self-talk and self-kindness).

4 Get Curious About Procrastination

What is the flavor of your procrastination? What do you think it's saying to you?

Typically, procrastination stems from front or back-end perfectionism, fear of failure, lack of information, task initiation issues, feeling overwhelmed, disinterest, or anxiety due to lack of confidence. To tackle these challenges, please take a look at the following worksheet suggestions.

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Flourish Worksheet for Procrastination

A: Investigate Your Procrastination

1. Task Analysis:

Question: Why am I avoiding this task?

- ☐ The task seems too long.
- ☐ It appears complex.
- ☐ It feels unengaging.

2. Emotions & Thoughts:

Question: What emotions or thoughts arise when I think about starting this task?

_____

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3. Self-Talk:

Question: What things am I saying to myself about being able to do the task?

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Note: Negative self-talk can inhibit action. Reassuring self-talk can motivate you.

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4. Task Details:

Question: Is there a specific part of the task I am avoiding or is it the whole thing?(ie the environment of where the task occurs, the starting, organizing or finishing of the task).

_____

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Pinpointing this can help you find solutions.

5. Physical State Check-In:

Question: How do I feel right now when thinking about the task?

- [ ] Tense
- [ ] Relaxed
- [ ] Anxious
- [ ] Energetic
- [ ] Overwhelmed

_____

_____

Your physical state provides hints about underlying feelings.

6. Alignment with Values:

Question: Is this task in line with my values and strengths?

_____

_____

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Part B: Identify Roots of Your Procrastination

Procrastination Based on Fears:

Fear of Failure

Years of criticism can make fear of failure a key reason for procrastination.

✅Solutions:

- ▢ Distanced self-talk
- ▢ Recall past successes
- ▢ Focus on progress, not perfection
- ▢ Align with values
- ▢ Practice self-compassion
- ▢ Willingness and Action plan

Fear of Criticism

Early-life criticism can cement this fear, making it protective

✅Solutions:

- ▢ Engage in self-compassion exercises (e.g., journaling, meditation, breaks)
- ▢ Remember compliments and past achievements
- ▢ Willingness and Action plan

Anxiety (rooted in feeling overwhelmed)

✅Solutions:

- ▢ Grounding exercises
- ▢ Break tasks into bite-sized steps
- ▢ Use sensory soothers (e.g., calming music, tactile objects)
- ▢ Find a peaceful space to minimize sensory overload
- ▢ Willingness and Action plan

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Past Memories of Failures

Previous traumas can intensify current apprehensions, particularly due to ADHD's emotional regulation challenges.

✅Solutions:

- ▢ View past experiences through a compassionate perspective.
- ▢ Discuss prior events with someone to attain a fresh viewpoint.
- ▢ Embrace self-compassion.
- ▢ Use distanced self-talk techniques.
- ▢ Develop a willingness and action plan.
- ▢ Implement self-accommodation strategies.

Need More Information or Clarification on Task

It might be challenging to seek assistance if you've been scolded for asking for help.

✅Solutions:

- ▢ Hone self-advocacy skills.
- ▢ Engage in self-compassion exercises.
- ▢ Approach trustworthy individuals with inquiries.
- ▢ Gain proficiency in asking for assistance.

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Based on Executive Functioning Issues:

Boredom or Lack of Interest Insight:

Engaging with tasks in stimulating ways can help combat boredom.

✅Solutions:

- ▢ Use colorful markers or tools to enhance visual appeal.
- ▢ Incorporate sensory stimulators.
- ▢ Choose an activity from a dopamine menu.
- ▢ Add sensory elements, like chewing gum or background music.
- ▢ Gamify the task or set a reward system.

Lack of Motivation due to dopamine

The ADHD brain may struggle with internal motivation due to dopamine imbalances.

✅Solutions:

- ▢ Seek external motivators, such as accountability partners.
- ▢ Play music or pair with something to get you going using a dopamine menu
- ▢ Offer yourself short-term rewards upon task completion.
- ▢ Visualize the successful end result and the subsequent satisfaction. Question the necessity: Do you even need to do the task?

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Based on Executive Functioning Issues:

Initiation Difficulties (Starting a Task or Project)

A prevalent executive functioning challenge is initiating tasks.

✅ **Solutions:**

- ☐ Commence with the simplest part of the task.
- ☐ Use visual aids: task lists, mind maps, etc., to enhance clarity.
- ☐ Challenge yourself: Can you commit to just 15 minutes?
- ☐ Begin with the tiniest conceivable step.

Overwhelmed by the Task

💡 *Insight:* ADHD can intensify sensations of being overwhelmed.

✅ **Solutions:**

- ▢ Refer to **Module 5 (Stress Module)** and the **Self-Accommodations Module**.
- ▢ Tackle it **one step at a time**.
- ▢ Break the task into **manageable portions**.
- ▢ Schedule **specific start and end times** for work periods.
- ▢ Incorporate **short intervals for rejuvenation**.
- ▢ Make necessary **accommodations**.

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Miscellaneous

Rebellion

ADHD people may have a heightened sense of autonomy.

✅ **Solutions:**

- ☐ **Reflect:** Am I resisting my own desires?
- ☐ **Reevaluate:** Is this task essential, or can it be approached differently?
- ☐ **Reframe:** Visualize the task as a **choice, not an obligation**.

Lack of Resources

💡 *Question:* Do you possess everything required for the task?

✅ **Solutions:**

- ☐ Design a **checklist** detailing commonly needed items.
- ☐ Consider if you need to **solicit resources** from someone.
- ☐ Do you need **guidance** on how to request assistance?
- ☐ Seek **support from the group**.
- ☐ Engage with a **therapist or a friend**.
- ☐ Ensure **all required items** are prepared before beginning.

Perfectionism

💡 *ADHD and perfectionism can sometimes coincide, often as a reaction to past critiques.*

✅ **Solution:**

- ☐ Refer to our **Perfectionism Unit**.

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Summary

The task I'm struggling with

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_____

_____

The reason I've uncovered I'm struggling

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_____

_____

_____

Some new ways to cope cope

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Ways this procrastination may be hurting.

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Ways this procrastination may be helping.

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Introducing Procrastivity

Procrastivity: The Productive Delay

A form of procrastination, *procrastivity* happens when you put off a high-priority task by focusing on a less urgent—but still useful—one.

Example: You need to write a paper, but instead, you unload the dishwasher. Sure, the dishwasher needed attention, but your real priority was writing.

Insight: The tasks you choose during procrastivity are often things you've already postponed—just not the *thing* you're avoiding most.

Some people justify this by saying, *"I'll tackle smaller tasks first to build momentum for bigger ones."* If that approach genuinely helps, it's not procrastination. But often, it just delays what really needs to get done.

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Why do certain tasks become procrastivity tasks you do first?

Decoding Procrastivity Tasks

1 **Manual**

They involve hands-on work.

2 **Structured**

They have clear, well-defined steps.

3 **Time-bounded**

They have defined start and stop times.

These tasks give a clearer sense of progress and often feel less overwhelming, especially for those with ADHD. Therefore you choose these tasks instead! It makes perfect sense.

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What Tasks Do People With ADHD Often Procrastinate Against?

Tasks that are:

1. **Overwhelming and broad.**
2. **Lacking a clear start or end time.**
3. **Without a distinct sequence.**
4. **Mentally demanding (high cognitive load).**
5. **Potentially emotionally overwhelming.**

For instance, taxes are frequently avoided by everyone, but especially people with adhd. Someone might choose to mow the lawn (procrastivity) when they should be working on their taxes.

This is because of the complexity of the task taxes, but the simpleness of the task mowing the lawn (even if it's not fun).

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Here are some lessons from procrastivity.

1 **Make it Manual**

Introduce a physical aspect to the task.

2 **Break it Down**

Convert overwhelming tasks into step-by-step actions.

3 **Get Started**

Turn an idea into a tangible step that involves doing.

4 **Visualize Steps**

Represent the task as a visual sequence.

5 **Set Boundaries**

Define a time or task limit.

6 **Personalize**

Adjust the task to what works best for you.

7 **Chunk Big Projects**

Segment them and set appointments for each chunk.

8 **Leave Notes**

If you pause a task, jot down where you stopped.

9 **Provide Guidance**

Give yourself sequencing cues for re-engagement.

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Willingness and Action Plan

The Willingness and Action Plan is a strategy to address procrastination based in fear and anxiety. This is not helpful if you haven't practiced our model addressing self-accommodation, self compassion and self advocacy first. If the issues are rooted in executive functioning, this will not be helpful either.

Procrastination often arises from a mix of avoidance behaviors and overwhelming feelings, and that can exacerbate negative beliefs about yourself.

This worksheet helps you state your goals and understand what's truly important to you, especially when you are struggling with procrastination. By spotting problems early on, you can tackle anxiety and self criticism that gets in the way head-on and avoid putting things off.

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The Willingness and Action Plan

My Goal:

Describe your specific goal:

_____

_____

Values Underpinning My Goal:

List the values that guide your goal:

_____

_____

Action Steps:

Detail the specific actions you'll undertake to achieve this goal:

_____

_____

When you think about the task what happens for you ?

Write anything in each row below that feels important.

Thoughts/Memories:
Sensations
Urges
Feelings

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Personal Commitments:

Identify what you're willing to accept or manage from above to realize this goal:

_____

Reminders:

Note key affirmations or things you want to remember:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Break It Down:

If your goal seems too vast, detail smaller sub-tasks or steps:

_____

_____

_____

First Step:

Identify the most straightforward task to commence your journey:

_____

_____

Commitment:

Specify the time, day, and date you'll embark on the initial step:

_____

_____