Procrastination

A Hidden Trait

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Procrastination is a problem of self-regulation, not a problem of time management or lack of ambition. Procrastinators are often more optimistic of their plans than their actions, so much that personal goals are affected by lack of immediate efforts.

Procrastinators often reassure themselves with lies. For example, a student facing impending examinations may have the exam timetable up on his/her room wall ages ago and in possession of various study material, but is unable to 'get down to business'.

According to Joseph R. Ferrari (Ph.D.), Associate Professor of Psychology at De Paul University, Chicago, there are **three types of procrastinators:**

1. Adrenaline-seekers who obtain euphoria from last-minute efforts.

2. Those who are very conscious of other's perceptions of themselves; they avoid putting in effort in such a way that they would not be perceived as lacking in abilities.

3. Those who are unable to make decisions, hence removing any obligation of effort.

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Other causes of procrastination are:

4. People who are perfectionists, delaying efforts due to the insecurity of producing less-than-perfect results.

5. Overwhelming difficulty in tasks required (potentially gets worse with procrastination)

In my own words, procrastination tends to be the inability to commit to timely responsibilities, keeping company with "I want to achieve that goal. I will put in the effort later'.

Signs of procrastination you should look out for while preparing for exams:

1. Often substituting exam preparation time for daily chores (e.g.: spending more time doing laundry or eating lunch than sitting down with the books).

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2. Taking longer 'breaks' than planned (e.g.: planned to break for a cup of coffee, but ended up transfixed to a two-hour TV show even after the coffee is long finished).

3. Being distracted by other activities (e.g.: surfing Facebook for hours on end) after stumbling upon a difficult part of revision, instead of carrying on with other parts.

4. Spending too much time in preliminary mode rather than undertaking the main body of effort (e.g.: re-reading notes while postponing attempts at challenging practice questions).

5. Underestimating the degree of difficulty of a task (e.g.: thinking that pushing it later will not affect the final outcome much).

> **"The art of writing is the art of applying the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair."**
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> **Mary Heaton Vorse, 1874–1966, American Journalist**

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There are feasible methods to minimize procrastination. The common feature of such methods is to develop satisfaction from putting immediate effort into completing a task. In the case of exam preparations:

1. Divide time and effort to revise a large topic into smaller sub-topics.

2. Reward yourself upon the completion of each sub-topic that brings you closer to understanding the full-topic.

3. After revising each topic, attempt past-year exam questions related to the topic just revised.

4. Discuss topics in a group and seek immediate advice or clarification from lecturers on overwhelming issues.

5. Work on relatively more difficult tasks intermittently with easier tasks to provide a balance of morale.

6. Keep the mindset that genuine effort is more often a better gauge of success than perfection.

7. Above all, remind yourself that delaying effort to prepare for the examination can only increase anxiety around the exam period, resulting in adverse outcomes.

If we arrange alphabets A-Z with corresponding numbers 1-26, the word 'ATTITUDE' sums up to 100. Hence, to remain at 100% in the run-up to the exams, we must develop the right attitude. Start by saying 'NO' to procrastination!