Behavioral and Cognitive Strategies to Stop Procrastinating

Identify and Plan:

- Identify your special behavioral diversions
- Note when and where you use them
- Plan how to diminish and control their use

Bits and Pieces:

- Break large tasks into small ones.
- Prioritize work and set deadlines.
- Use behavioral suggestions, e.g., lay the book you have to read out in plain view.

The Ten Minute Plan:

- Work on a dreaded task for ten minutes, then decide whether or not to continue.

Bogged in the Middle:

- Change location or position; take a break; switch subjects or tasks.

Contracts:

- Make contracts with yourself or someone you see regularly.

Premack Principle:

- Reward yourself for accomplishment.

Cognitive Strategies to Overcome Procrastination

Prepare yourself mentally. Think of:

- When, not if
- The price of delay
- Positive thoughts
• Learn to tolerate discomfort

**Watch for mental self-seductions into behavioral diversions.** Examples include:

• "I'll do it tomorrow"
• "What's the harm of a half-hour of TV now? I've still got time"
• "I deserve some time for myself"
• "I can't do it."

**Dispute mental diversions:** Ex. "I really don't have that much time left, and other things are sure to come up later," or "If I get this done, I'll be better able to enjoy my time," or "Once I get started, it won't be that bad."

*Mendelson and Stuckey, 1983 University Counseling Center, UNC-Chapel Hill - Not to be duplicated without permission of authors. Compiled by Pauline McNeill, 1992*

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