



mind mapping classes

FOCUS perseverance

LECTURES AMBITION

TIME MANAGEMENT peer coaching

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How do you prevent procrastination?

“OK, one more episode of that TV-series and then I will really start studying for my exam.” “OK, I will quickly check my email and Facebook and then I will really start.”

Sound familiar? Do you ever find yourself procrastinating? Studying, taking study matter in and processing it takes a lot of energy. You have to force the brain, which wants to free associate, to concentrate. It is not hard when it involves an suspenseful novel. But what if the subject matter is difficult, not fun or very interesting? Or you have to take an exam on it, or write a paper on it or something equally unpleasant. That will take extra effort because you have to win from the other YOU in your internal dialogue:

YOU 1: I am going to sit down and begin.

YOU 2: just watch one more YouTube video.

YOU 1: you know how that will end.

YOU 2: don't be silly, just five more minutes and then I will really start.

The harder the subject matter, the greater the chance you will lose this fight. There is so much to do: dishes, tidying up, calling mom, drink a beer... Oh well, there is always tomorrow. The more frequently this scenario occurs, the deeper your confidence sinks. But also: the more frequently this occurs, the less you feel you deserve to relax. You're not doing anything for your study, but you can't really enjoy your free time anymore either. Because you should be studying. Ultimately you go to bed without having achieved anything, angry, dissatisfied and very tired. How can you prevent this?

Planning

By making a well organised and realistic schedule you can prevent procrastination. You will know exactly where you stand and you can make priorities. To make such a schedule you can check our website for tips on planning.

Dealing with procrastination excuses

“There is always tomorrow”, “I can only perform under pressure”, “this day is gone already” are examples of excuses which procrastinators give themselves to delay having to work. Sound familiar? Often you are aware that you give yourself excuses. To prevent procrastination it may help to be more aware of the excuses you give yourself. Teach yourself to write down the excuse you have made up every time you delay something. Carefully examine that excuse. Is the day really gone because you got out of bed late? Or are there plenty of hours left and will you feel more motivated tomorrow if you still do some work now? In short, try to recognise and expose your excuses and replace them with a motivating alternative. For example: “If I do some work now I'll be finished sooner”.

Self-rewarding

Research shows that rewarding aids learning better than punishment. It indicates a direction. Anything can be a reward... it symbolises the pat on the shoulder that you need to keep going. Make a list of possible rewards, starting with an extra tasty sandwich, one with cheese AND rocket salad or a delicious cup of coffee. It can be something you already do, like emailing or surfing the internet. Make them into a reward for an hour of studying. In short: study first, Facebook later.

Student Services

Student Psychologists' Office - Student Careers Centre - Student Counsellors
Student Service Desk - Office of International Student Affairs

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Deal with anxiety

Some people don't dare to study because they feel like they won't be able to succeed. Such thoughts stimulate procrastination and causes them to ultimately fail. In hindsight the person can say "I didn't pass the exam but I haven't done that much for it". This is form of self-defence which will work in the short term but will not create good results in the long term. Try to prevent such thoughts from influencing your behaviour. Rather, tell yourself "I am afraid I will fail, but I will try my hardest". Try to break through (anxious) procrastination and start working. You will learn that the tension diminishes and that you can handle your study. For more tips on dealing with stress; see the article 'How to deal with exam stress'.

Most important points

- Make a realistic schedule
- Recognise your procrastination behaviour. Write down your excuse!
- Reward yourself after studying for an hour

Training courses/workshops:

- *Studie op de rails* (Study on track)
- *Plan je studie* (Plan your study)
- E-coaching

Questions?

Do you still have questions about procrastination, contact the Student Psychologists' Office: 020-525 2599.

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