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## EXPLAINING THE NATURE OF PROCRASTINATION

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Everyone puts things off sometimes, but procrastinators avoid difficult tasks and look for distractions. Procrastination (from latin: procrastinare, pro-, «forward», with «crastinus», «till next day» from cras, «tomorrow») – the act of delaying something that must be done, often because it is unpleasant or boring [1]. It's a trap that many of us fall into. According to researcher and speaker Piers Steel, 95 percent of us procrastinate to some degree. Do you to remember the evening before an exam? Was it calm or full of panic? Many researchers have been trying to sort out this issue, and to understand what happens in the mind of a procrastinator. Procrastination is variously described as harmful innocuous, or even beneficial (at the example of various types of students):

- early in the term: procrastinators have lower stress and less illness than nonprocrastinators. And they receive lower grades on many subjects.
- at the end of the term: they have a higher stress and more illness, and overall, they were sicker.

«Procrastination is action of ruining own life for no apparent reason with short-term benefits and long-term costs. The causes of procrastination can be mental and physical. In other words, psychological or physiological» [2]. Research has shown that procrastination is significantly correlated with: poor study habits; depression; anxiety; lycanthropy; low self-esteem. May we have made one of those up, but the fact remains that procrastination is a damaging habit to be in.

But why do we procrastinate? The human brain is often as irrational and indecisive as it is powerful. The rational part of our brain (the prefrontal cortex) is locked in a constant battle with the more emotional, instinctive side (the amygdala). Primarily procrastination is an issue of emotional regulation. It is a bad habit, close to drug addiction.

What is the biology of Procrastination? A research team in Germany did fMRI brain scans on 264 adults [3], and they found a link between difficulties in acting on tasks (procrastination) and a greater amounts of gray matter volume in the amygdala, which is the brain's «fight or flight» center.

«As the amygdala shrinks the prefrontal cortex associated with higher-order brain functions such as awareness concentration and decision-making become thicker» [3].

They found a link between difficulties in initiating action on tasks and a greater volume of gray matter in the amygdala which is the brains “fight or flight” center (the results merely show an association rather than claiming a direct causal link). And this connection is individually different.

But how does this really happen? For example, how are you planning to do all the work on time? The graph shows you how normal students think to do all their work. Do you do all the work gradually or on the last day? Can't you start doing work on time? And two months turned into one month, which turned into two weeks and one day you woke up with three days until deadline. And when, by some miracle, work is made, you think, that someone will say: «It's the best work we have ever seen!» But, no, that is not happening, it is awful work.

Now we will describe the hypothesis of what differs the brain of a procrastinator and other people. Compare the internal structure of procrastinator's brain and brain of a proven non-procrastinator. Imagine that some «Rational Decision-Maker» [4] in the procrastinator's brain is coexisting with a «pet» – the «Instant Gratification Monkey». This would be fine – cute, even – if the Rational Decision-Maker knew the first thing about how to own a monkey. And now you are already watching a video on YouTube and study the structure of the slime and analyze Genghis Khan's bloodline. It's a mess. But there is one thing that greatly frightens the Monkey. It's a «Panic Monster», he wakes up as soon as the deadline comes or there is a danger of public censure, career collapse or other terrible consequences. Procrastinators are not to blame for sometimes giving in to temptation. They fall prey to the feeling that encourages fun tasks over productive, sensible ones.

But how can we stop Procrastinating? Chronic procrastination can literally change the brain structure. But don't worry – our brains are extremely adaptable. The right habits can rewire our brains for the better. In fact, a productive first step to better habits is forgiving yourself for the past procrastination you've done. Your perfectionism is the enemy of productivity and the friend of procrastination. In Dr. Steel's book, «The Procrastination Equation», he presents an equation that explains your current level of motivation to accomplish something:

$$\frac{\text{Expectancy} \cdot \text{Value}}{\text{Impulsiveness} \cdot \text{Delay}}$$

- Expectancy: How confident you are that you can get this thing done
- Value: How much this task means to you.
- Impulsiveness: How easily you give into temptations
- Delay: How long you have to wait before you received the expected rewards of completing the task

«The point is that complex human behaviors are not best understood by simple equations or formula although the theories that these formulae represent can be useful in our discussion of behavior» [5].

If you need to stop procrastinating, evaluate your situation based on these four variables and identify your strong and weak points. And you'll gain a better sense of self-awareness. And what are the next steps? [6] [7].

1. If distractions fuel your procrastination, the first step you'll need to take is to find the optimal study space;
2. Remove distractions. If you return to the same space over and over, your mind can channel its energy into work instead of wondering why you're moving from place to place;
3. The next solution? Become a robot. Break down your to-do list into small, manageable chunks and check them off one at time;
4. Use the Pomodoro Technique;
5. Make yourself a challenge or start a challenge with a friend;
6. Avoid Toxic People and Situations. Does your environment inspire you to do work or put it off?
7. Close Your Browser and Get to Work;

8. You must to controlling the situation;
9. And in the end, accept the Part of You That Wants to Be Lazy.

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