

Mindfulness for Wellbeing and Peak Performance



• Tips for overcoming procrastination

By Dr Sherelle Connaughton, based on prior comments by Jen Opie and excerpts from the 'FIT1049 Rewiring the Brain for Wellbeing and Peak Performance Student Manual' by Assoc Prof Craig Hassed and Dr Richard Chambers.

Procrastination is very common and doing this sometimes is not something to be overly concerned about. But for learners who find they procrastinate often, please note that we can get into the habit of procrastinating and always needing a deadline to help motivate us - which can become problematic over time.

Fortunately though, it is possible to change this habit by repeatedly noticing when we start to procrastinate and taking some steps towards action instead.

Here are some extra tips that can help get us out of the cycle of avoidance and procrastination

- Just get started! Commit to a task for just five minutes and see what happens. Getting started is usually the hardest part, but once things start moving you will often gain some momentum and it will become easier to keep going.
- Break down a seemingly overwhelming task into manageable chunks and tackle these one at a time.
- Make a list of tasks that need to be done, prioritise those that are the most urgent and/or important and work down the list, taking time to acknowledge your effort and reward yourself for each task completed.
- Alternatively, you can start with the most unpleasant task on your list, in order to get it over with, and work down until you get to the easier ones.
- Set an alarm for a specific time (e.g., 15 or 25 minutes), work on the task for that time and then take a very quick break before starting another minute block of time on the task. After few short blocks with mini-breaks, you can then reward yourself with a slightly longer break before coming back to the task, following the [Pomodoro technique](#)
- Imagine that you have completed a task that you have been avoiding and imagine how this would feel. Take some moments to connect with this feeling, and then consider what you would have had to do to reach this point. Connecting with that feeling of

satisfaction/accomplishment/relief can be motivating, and considering each step involved to reach that point may help you to plan effectively.

As you experiment with all this, be kind and gentle towards yourself and remember that it takes time and effort to change old habits and cultivate new ones.

Also, please note that procrastination often overlaps with perfectionism and can be a way of regulating emotions such as fear of failure. This can be done by distracting yourself from what you actually need to be doing (by checking emails, waiting for a “better time” etc).

Finally, please be aware that some people might think they are procrastinators, but they simply have put too many things on their ‘To Do’ list. Hence they are not **avoiding** tasks (which is the mark of a real procrastinator) and they are getting things done - just not as many as they would like.