## The Psychology of Procrastination and strategies to overcome them.

## Procrastination is a complex phenomenon that affects individuals in various aspects of their lives, from academic and work responsibilities to personal tasks. Procrastination is often viewed as a self-regulation failure characterized by the irrational delay of tasks. While some may attribute procrastination to poor time management or a lack of willpower, recent studies suggest that procrastination is closely linked to emotional factors. Fear of failure or success, perfectionism, lack of motivation, and instant gratification are common psychological factors that contribute to procrastination.

Contrary to popular belief, procrastination is not a sign of “laziness” or poor time management. In fact it is almost never about the actual task at hand but usually the body’s way of relieving stress, dodging discomfort or avoiding a particular emotion we don’t know how to process. It is an emotional regulation problem driven by factors like anxiety, self-doubt, or insecurity triggered by certain tasks.

Understanding the root causes of procrastination is essential in developing effective strategies to overcome this behavior and enhance productivity. In the book “It’s about time” psychologist Linda Sapadin mentions the 6 styles of procrastination; The Perfectionist, The Worrier, The Over-doer, The Dreamer, The Crisis maker and The Defier. The first three styles are anxiety based and the later are boredom based.

The perfectionist fears failing or producing less-than-perfect results because of which they eventually end up avoiding starting tasks that feel daunting or unclear. The worrier wants to avoid the discomfort of change and struggle, and puts off tasks on which they believe they may not succeed. The over-doer fears failing to meet impossibly high standards and as a result over commits to too many projects and tasks. The dreamer loves thinking high-level abstract thoughts, but struggles handle the details and break work down into action-focused tasks. The crisis-maker believes he can't work without a pressing deadline and waits to begin to capitalize on the pressure of the last minute The defier rebels against the rules and resists things they are "supposed to do" when they don't see the immediate value in them. These 6 styles help us understand the nature of how procrastination can manifest in various ways.

Chronic procrastination can have detrimental effects on both personal and professional life. It leads to decreased productivity, missed deadlines, increased stress levels, strained relationships, and hinders personal growth and skill development. The cycle of procrastination can perpetuate feelings of guilt, anxiety, and inadequacy, creating a significant barrier to success and fulfillment.

Procrastination is a prevalent behavior that many individuals struggle with, despite its widespread occurrence, several misconceptions surround procrastination, hindering effective solutions to this issue. Some common myths we can debunk on procrastination are:

1. Procrastination is a Sign of Laziness: As mentioned earlier procrastination is not solely a result of laziness. In reality, procrastination is often an emotional regulation problem driven by factors like anxiety, self-doubt, or insecurity triggered by certain tasks.
2. Procrastination is Due to Poor Time Management: While time management skills play a role in task completion, procrastination is primarily an emotional self-harm strategy rather than a lack of time planning. Individuals may be distracted by negative moods and emotions, leading to procrastination as a coping mechanism.
3. Procrastination Arises from Incorrect Prioritization: Procrastination is rarely linked to wrong priorities or a lack of prioritization skills. The discomfort and unpleasant emotions associated with tasks can trigger procrastination as individuals seek to avoid these negative feelings by postponing the task.
4. Procrastination Enhances Performance Under Pressure: The belief that individuals work better under pressure due to procrastination is a common myth. In reality, working under stress leads to decreased performance and increased anxiety, highlighting that procrastination does not improve productivity.
5. Procrastination Reflects High Intelligence: Some individuals attribute their procrastination to high intelligence, suggesting that overthinking tasks leads to delays. However, intelligence levels do not correlate with procrastination; instead, factors like low self-confidence, perfectionism, and self-control play significant roles in this behavior
6. Procrastination Indicates Lack of Discipline: Viewing procrastination as a lack of discipline oversimplifies the complexity of this behavior. Building habits gradually and modifying one's environment are more effective strategies than relying solely on discipline to combat procrastination.

Individuals can implement various strategies to overcome this behavior and improve their productivity. Some strategies to overcome procrastination are:

1. Making Tasks Feel Manageable: Breaking down tasks into smaller, manageable parts with clear deadlines can reduce feelings of overwhelm and increase motivation. Setting specific goals and milestones helps individuals track progress and stay focused on the task at hand.
2. Creating a Plan of Action: Formulating detailed plans outlining when, where, and how tasks will be completed establishes a mental association between intentions and actions. This approach minimizes the likelihood of procrastination by providing a clear roadmap for task completion.
3. Finding an Accountability Partner: Sharing challenges with procrastination and seeking external accountability from a partner, mentor, or coach can enhance motivation and commitment to overcoming procrastination. Regular check-ins and support from others help individuals stay on track and maintain progress.
4. Managing one’s Environment: Minimizing distractions and creating a conducive work environment can help individuals stay focused and avoid procrastination. Eliminating potential triggers for procrastination, such as excessive noise or clutter, promotes a productive workspace conducive to task completion.

In conclusion, understanding the psychology of procrastination is essential for developing effective strategies to combat this behavior and improve productivity. By recognizing the root causes of procrastination, implementing targeted interventions, and fostering discipline and accountability, individuals can break free from the cycle of procrastination and achieve greater success, fulfillment, and personal growth in various aspects of life.