

## Procrastination

Procrastination is almost purely behavioural. The advantages of procrastinating seem to outweigh the disadvantages, even though this seems unlikely and/or incorrect. What happens is: short-term interests take precedence over long-term interests. A low frustration threshold is often behind this behaviour, which revolves around fear of the possible negative consequences of actually doing whatever it is that needs to be done (e.g. the risk of failing, not being able to work something out straight away, having to ask for help, plodding on, etc.). Indeed, procrastination effectively postpones these negative consequences, which in turn rewards the procrastination; a vicious circle is born. Occasionally procrastination is the result of a mood disorder. Someone who feels down will not be motivated to start anything, and this in turn will not improve their mood, yet again creating a vicious circle.

There is also a group of people who procrastinate to put themselves under pressure without fear playing a causal role. They simply perform better under pressure, which is okay since this actually helps them.

### QuickScan

- Do you tend to put things off time and again?
- Do you tend to postpone starting your (study)tasks and does this annoy you?
- Does putting something off often lead to not doing it at all?
- Do you feel guilty about procrastinating?

### Approach

#### What can you do yourself?

When you find yourself procrastinating, make a list of the pros and cons of your behaviour, asking yourself the following questions: What do I gain by procrastinating? What am I avoiding by procrastinating? What is the price I pay for procrastinating? Is this what I want? If the answer to the last question is yes, carry on procrastinating. If the answer is no, you should perhaps ask yourself what you *do* want and how you can achieve this. Desirable behaviour also has its drawbacks. Are you prepared to accept them?

#### What can we do for you?

For instance cognitive and behavioural therapy will help you to get on top of your procrastination. It is also possible that procrastination is a symptom of an underlying problem, and we can help you to find out what is really going on. We offer both short-term individual consultation and courses (e.g. Motivation). Visit <http://psychologists.tudelft.nl>.

### More information

- <http://waitbutwhy.com/2013/10/why-procrastinators-procrastinate.html>
- <http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/procrastination>
- Eat that frog!: 21 great ways to stop procrastinating and get more done in less time (Brian Tracy), ISBN13: 9781576754221
- Solving the procrastination puzzle: a concise guide to strategies for change (Timothy A. Pynchl), ISBN13: 9780399168123
- The motivation switch: 77 ways to get motivated, avoid procrastination and achieve success (AJ Winters), ISBN13: ?
- The cure for the “perfect” life: 12 ways to stop trying harder and start living braver (Kathi Lipp, Cheri Gregory), ISBN13: 9780736957007