

Procrastination

Dr. Matthew May

- 0:56 Definition of procrastination, examples

- Procrastination can be healthy. In life, we must attend to what is urgent and important, and let some things go.
- **Unhealthy procrastination is a pattern of repeatedly postponing important tasks and activities to the extent that it causes problems in our life.**
- *Book: Procrastinate on Purpose*
- What do we procrastinate?
 - Water-treading activities: Paperwork, studying, paying bills, exercise, flossing, cleaning - things we don't feel thrilled to have to do.
 - Outcome: Even if something were as easy to do as pressing a button, we might procrastinate doing it, because we fear failure.
 - Process: We don't want to go through the effort required to accomplish task.

- 5:00 Treating the entire mind as a whole

- All parts of the mind are connected. Without addressing the entire mind and what is out of balance, you could overlook some obvious things that would just make it run smoother.
 - *TEAM - Model of therapy*
 - Testing, Empathy, (Paradoxical) Agenda Setting, Methods
- *Podcast between Dr. Burns and Dr. May*
- Procrastination is related to other habits and addictions. People with procrastination and other habits and addictions will frequently feel embarrassed, guilty, ashamed, and even worthless. These negative feelings worsen the initial problem of procrastination.
- These feelings cause people to feel hopeless. This hopelessness drains motivation, and creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. It becomes a cycle of repeated failure and negative emotions.
- The most effective treatment addresses the entire individual in a customized way. The idea isn't to change habits or addictions or procrastination or depression or anxiety. The idea is to change ourselves.

- 10:42 Acknowledge feelings with kindness, love and self-acceptance

- Instead of negative thoughts, we sometimes have excessively positive thoughts

- Ex: I don't have to do this right now, I've got plenty of time.
- Ex: I'll just do 5 minutes of Facebooking. Nothing bad will happen.
- Accepting ourselves in a loving way - despite our many flaws - is an essential part of enduring change. Failure is a required part of learning and growth. The very nature of love is to accept others despite their flaws.
- Loving ourselves precisely as we are seems counter-intuitive. However, loving and forgiving ourselves when we fail isn't the same as apathy or complacency. **Loving and accepting ourselves is, in fact, the best motivation to make a healthy change, and to sustain that new behavior over time.**
- Addiction and Habit log
- Daily Mood Log
- In the Habit and Addiction log, we use one specific moment to learn which skills and tools will help us.
- What is the beautiful thing about an individual who is telling themselves something like this? What is good about me, that is causing me to have these thoughts?

Thought	Positive Reframing
I can do this tomorrow.	I am spontaneous. I love to live in the present, smell the roses along the way.
I'm letting people down.	I care about people a lot.
I'll never be able to finish this.	I am realistic. I am logical, because I use observations of my past experiences to predict the future.

- **What we often consider to be 'negative' feelings or thoughts are, in fact, reflections of very positive qualities that we possess.** Recognizing and acknowledging these deeper values is a deep form of empathy and compassion for ourselves and helps reduce the internal conflict we feel when we are suffering emotionally.
- **31:00 Exercise: Paradoxical Decision Making**
 - The idea is to only focus on two aspects of the decision: the advantages of maintaining the bad habit and the disadvantages of change.
 - What is awesome about being lazy?
 - What is terrible about exercise?

- This type of decision making creates a ‘win-win’ scenario. Either you recognize all the reasons why you are the way you are and decide not to change, or you start to feel an overwhelming desire to change and to overcome those reasons.
- **38:50 Devil’s Advocate Technique**
 - Write down the tempting thoughts that come to mind. Then see if you can talk back to them. Can you debate with them without fear or guilt-tripping yourself?
 - You are fighting temptation with an even greater temptation.
 - Doing it with kids - “Do you want to practice stomping on ants?”
 - Ex:
 - I’ve had a tough day. I deserve a break.
 - I have had a tough day, but I’m strong and capable. I deserve to have a nice place to live, a strong and healthy body.
- **46:00 Problem Solution Technique**
 - Identify in advance anything that can make you stumble, and find a solution. What are the problems that could interfere with my commitment?
 - What if the worst happened? What would we do?
 - So many times we visualize the problem, and then stop there. Let’s not stop there. Let’s move on to visualize the solution, and resolve that. Turn and face the anxiety.
- **52:00 Anti-procrastination Technique**
 - **Nobody has ever *done* their laundry. They have only done one of the steps below, one at a time, until their laundry was done.** Breaking the task into small, realistic steps removes the sense of dread, fear, overwhelm and panic that can arise when we try to do the impossible. Breaking problems into small steps makes the impossible possible.
 - Doing Laundry
 - Step 1: Walk into my room.
 - Step 2: Open my closet door.
 - Step 3: Pick up one article of clothing.
 - Step 4: Identify whether it’s a dark, light, requires dry-cleaning or requires mending.
 - Step 5: Put that item in a place designated of the type of item it is.
 - Step 6: Repeat steps 1-5 for the next item in the pile.
 - Step 7: Carry a pile of sorted clothing to my washing machine.
 - Step 8: Put the clothes in the washer.

- Step 9: Put detergent in the washer.
- Step 10: Select the appropriate cycle.
- Step 11: Press 'start.'
- Step 12: While the washer is going: work on mending, taking clothes to be dry-cleaned or working on stains.
- Step 13: Remove clean wet clothes from washer.
- Step 14: Put clean wet clothes into dryer.
- Step 15: While the dryer is going: work on mending, taking clothes to be dry-cleaned or working on stains.
- Book: GTD
- How difficult will each step be, 0-100? Rate, then run it as an experiment - to see how difficult it actually is.
- How do you help yourself continue to try things that are new, when time and time again, your tried solutions have failed?
 - Fail at each method as quickly as possible, so that you can move on to find the method that will work.
- **1:03:40 Relapse prevention**
 - Relapse can be frustrating, especially when we expect ourselves to move forward without setbacks. But it is essential to recognize that we ALL relapse.
 - When you relapse, which way will you go?
 - "Hey, no big deal. This is just a relapse. I'll just do the same techniques that worked for me last time and I'll be recovered in no time."
 - "I'm a hopeless case. Why didn't I realize it sooner? There is nothing that can help me. I am worthless."
 - Relapse is hypnotic. When you relapse, your thoughts get stuck in the latter. That is why you pre-commit to break out your mood log, your tools that helped you before, in spite of those thoughts. Practice relapse, so the skills are fresh in your mind.
 - The goal is to get you to a place where you are no longer worried about relapse, because if you are stuck in that place of anxiety, that is not recovery.
 - Mental health is parallel to physical health - lots of exercises are required to stay healthy.