Procrastination in context

Students are reporting widespread lack of motivation and are putting off work (procrastinating).

Although normal to do this sometimes, if it is preventing you from submitting work, or progressing with work, then it has become a problematic behaviour.

Uncertain times, and not being able to keep to your normal routine (e.g. going to the library) will have a huge impact

Add to this a sense that you should be revising/studying because there is very little else to do....
The breakthrough insight

Procrastination always has...

Hostility to the task

You might feel this as dread, resentment, frustration... and this affects our motivation, behaviour and mood.
Procrastination model

Situation: Worrying about exams

Thoughts: I’m so worried. I’m dreading this. Is this enough?

Emotion: Hostility, fear, guilt, sadness, bored

Bodily response: Heart racing, sweating, tiredness

Behaviour: Procrastination, avoidance, perfectionism, generating the deadline ‘high’
Procrastination

Unhelpful rules and assumptions underpinning the behaviour

• **Needing to be in charge**
  • Things should be done my way

• **Pleasure seeking**
  • Life is too short

• **Fear of failure or disapproval**
  • I must do things perfectly, or I’ll fail and people will think badly of me

• **Fear of uncertainty or catastrophe**
  • I’m better of not doing and not risking

• **Low self confidence**
  • I’m inadequate

• **Depleted energy**
  • I can’t do things when I’m stressed, tired, depressed or unmotivated
  • And have you always ‘got away with it’ in the past?...
Never set yourself up for an unachievable task

- Are you *aiming* to e.g. spend 12 hours at home studying more or less the whole time?
- Are you *aiming* to finish a whole subject area/topic ‘by the end of today’
- *Planning* to go over all lecture notes by the ‘end of this week’
- *Consider* instead the session model of revision with the goal of increasing *efficiency* and *productivity*
- So no more than *seven, 50 minute sessions in one day*, a break for *lunch*, a break after each session.
Managing procrastination
Managing procrastination

• **Just do it**
  • like getting into a cold swimming pool

• **Plan it**
  • part of your routine

• **Break the task**
  • into smaller tasks

• **Think differently**
  • lower expectations

• **Plan rewards**
  • and reinforcements

• **Set goals**
  • (not deadlines) and work towards them

• **Imagine**
  • how it might feel going into an exam prepared rather than with crossed fingers...
Managing procrastination continued

• **Worst first**
  • Get rid of worst goal or task first

• **Using momentum**
  • Do a task you like and while in the zone start a task you have been putting off

• **5 minute plan**
  • Spend 5 minutes on the task, reassess, can you spend another 5 minutes?

• **Set time limits**
  • 30 minutes and stick to it, even when going well
Useful resources

Ted Talks

YouTube:
- https://youtu.be/GTQ2xDNlLf8/
- https://youtu.be/v6jr1g7G4gE/