

Mel Robbins says procrastination is a form of stress relief. She also says, you're not a procrastinator, you're in the habit of procrastinating.

It's triggered by stress! It's not that you're lazy. Stop shaming yourself, it's STRESS.

Procrastination, often perceived as a mere lack of discipline, is a complex phenomenon rooted in our psychology and neural wiring.

It's more than just putting off something. It's not just an avoidance behavior, there's plenty behind it. That's why we lean into the science.

Understanding and overcoming procrastination requires more than just willpower; it involves adopting strategies grounded in scientific research.

Here are four principles, along with the science behind them, to help combat procrastination and reclaim control over your life. We're going to look at the science and the application so make sure you take notes!

1. Break Tasks into Smaller, Manageable Steps

Science: The Zeigarnik Effect suggests that people remember uncompleted or interrupted tasks better than completed tasks. This can lead to anxiety about unfinished work, which ironically, can make starting even harder.

Application: By breaking tasks into smaller, more manageable steps, you reduce the psychological barrier to starting. Each small step completed provides a sense of progress and accomplishment, leveraging the Zeigarnik Effect positively by keeping your brain engaged with the "unfinished" nature of the larger task, but in a way that motivates rather than overwhelms.

2. Use Time Management Techniques Like the Pomodoro Technique

Science: The Pomodoro Technique capitalizes on the fact that our brains work best with frequent breaks. It involves working for a set period (traditionally 25 minutes), followed by a short break. This method aligns with the concept of ultradian rhythms, cycles in which our alertness and energy naturally ebb and flow throughout the day.

Application: By working in sync with these natural rhythms, the Pomodoro Technique helps maintain high levels of focus and prevents burnout. The frequent breaks serve as mini-rewards, boosting motivation and satisfaction.

3. Set Specific, Measurable Goals

Science: Goal-setting theory posits that specific and challenging goals lead to higher performance than easy or vague goals. This is because specific goals direct attention, mobilize effort, and promote persistence, while also encouraging the development of strategies for achieving them.

Application: Setting specific, measurable goals turns abstract aspirations into concrete plans. This clarity reduces the cognitive load associated with planning and decision-making, making it easier to take action. Additionally, measurable goals provide clear criteria for success, offering motivation through visible progress.

4. Foster Self-Compassion

Science: Research by Dr. Kristin Neff and others has shown that self-compassion can significantly reduce procrastination. Unlike self-criticism, which can lead to fear of failure and subsequent avoidance, self-compassion encourages a kind, understanding attitude towards oneself, even in the face of failure or difficulty.

Application: Practicing self-compassion involves recognizing that procrastination is a common human experience and treating oneself with kindness during setbacks. This approach reduces the fear of negative self-evaluation that often underlies procrastination, making it easier to start and persist with tasks despite potential imperfections.

By integrating these principles into your daily life, you can tackle procrastination from a place of understanding and strategy, rather than guilt or frustration. Each principle offers a way to work with, rather than against, your natural tendencies and psychological needs, providing a sustainable path to productivity and fulfillment.