

The reasons we procrastinate and how to stop.

Have you ever sat down to complete an important task — and then suddenly discovered you were up loading the dishwasher or engrossed in the Wikipedia entry about Chernobyl? Or perhaps you suddenly realize that the dog needs to be fed, emails need to be answered, your ceiling fan needs dusting — or maybe you should go ahead and have lunch, even though it's only 11 a.m.?

Next thing you know, it's the end of the day and your important task remains unfinished.

For many people, procrastination is a strong and mysterious force that keeps them from completing the most urgent and important tasks in their lives with the same strength as when you try to bring like poles of a magnet together. It's also a potentially dangerous force, causing victims to fail out of school, perform poorly at work, put off medical treatment or delay saving for retirement. A Case Western Reserve University study from 1997 found that college-age procrastinators ended up with higher stress, more illness and lower grades by the end of the semester.

But the reasons people procrastinate are not understood that well. Some researchers have viewed procrastination largely as a failure of self-regulation — like other bad behaviors that have to do with a lack of self-control, such as overeating, a gambling problem or overspending. Others say it's not a matter of being lazy or poor time management, as many smart overachievers who procrastinate often can attest. They say it may actually be linked to how our brain works and to deeper perceptions of time and the self.

The real origins of procrastination

It usually happens when people fear or dread, or have anxiety about, the important task awaiting them. To get rid of this negative feeling, people procrastinate — they open up a video game or Pinterest instead. That makes them feel better temporarily, but unfortunately, reality comes back to bite them in the end.

Once the reality of a deadline sets in again, procrastinators feel more extreme shame and guilt. But for an extreme procrastinator, those negative feelings can be just another reason to put the task off, with the behavior turning into a vicious, self-defeating cycle.

Tim Urban, who runs the blog Wait But Why, created an amazing and funny explanation of what may happen inside the brain of a procrastinator. Urban calls himself a master procrastinator — he didn't begin writing a 90-page senior thesis until 72 hours before it was due. Urban recently gave a TED Talk about his own extreme procrastination tendencies, in which he used some of his own cartoons to explain how life is different for an extreme procrastinator.

Take a minute and **write down 2 things** that you have been putting off for quite some time that you can complete before our meeting next week? The team leader will hold onto your sheet and do a quick follow up at next weeks meeting to see how you did.

1. _____
2. _____



