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Tomorrow Is Yesterday

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Tomorrow Is YESTERDAY

By Marilyn Bergeson
Technical Journalism Junior

"DON'T POINT your finger at me when you say procrastinator! Why, I'm not a procrastinator. I just have too many things to do. I just don't have enough time."

And so go the identifying remarks of a procrastination suspect. They are usually a hard lot to detect. Who likes to admit that they are an enthusiast of that garbled version of an old saying, "Don't do today what you can put off until tomorrow?"

To procrastinate, Webster says, is to be dilatory, to defer, to delay, to waste time when one should act, to delay action through laziness, indifference or indecision. Probably everyone has procrastinated at one time or another and can detect its symptoms and regret its results as easily as they can those of a common cold. Because this weakness is so generally known, we need not enumerate here how ego-deflating, frightening or tragic the varied results of this affliction can be. But like the cold, how many of us can prescribe an effective medicine to relieve its pains immediately? It may be easier to recognize the "germ" when it has hit someone besides yourself.

Remember the night your roommate had to miss the big party because she hadn't started her term paper due the next day; remember the summer job lost because your sister didn't seem to get the application written in time? Even minor consequences resulting from procrastination warrant our concern about this bad habit.

Characteristics

Since psychiatrists have told us that one characteristic of a procrastinator is his inability to adjust to reality, why not begin right here and now to look at the situation in its proper perspective and consider some possible causes of procrastination. After the causes are discovered, the next step would be to experiment with possible cures.

Your best friend may be a procrastinator, or your mother or sister, your teacher or boss. You may admire them very much. A person can be charming, lovable, gay—and yet be a procrastinator. That is why it's not a sin, rather it's an affliction. But—and the most amazing thing of all is—you may be a procrastinator with great danger of becoming a member of that great organization (or rather, disorganization) of chronic procrastinators.

But, you say, it's not that you procrastinate, it's just that you work slowly, are a thorough thinker, try to do too much, or are the inevitable "clearing house" for everyone's odd jobs—four of the most common conscious reasons given by people who just don't seem to get everything done as it should be. These conscious excuses can seem strong and water-tight to you when you've got a big project ahead of you with a deadline to meet. But sometimes stronger, unconscious desires that may directly contradict the conscious reasons, creep in and take hold of you. Before you realize where the real blame lies, you are your own victim. Unconsciously you may secretly enjoy being a slow person, or you may like to be loaded with more to do than you know you are possibly able to handle, or you may enjoy the self-pity that comes with accepting everyone's flunky tasks. The underlying causes of such unconscious mental behavior might be such things as resistance to superiors or a superiority complex, or self pity or regression, and this list goes on and on.

Solutions

All of this may fit together as simply as a child's puzzle if you are willing to face reality and search your own mind.

And right there you've hit on the first step in overcoming this weakness, that is, REALIZATION THAT PROCRASTINATION IS YOUR PROBLEM! Once you have come to that conclusion, you can go on to discover what is the general area of its causes. It may be a factor named above. It may be something you are now equally unaware of, but that is especially unique for your variety of procrastination. Ask yourself questions to discover just what is your basic motive in putting off your tasks. Do you have a creeping suspicion that the job is too big for you? Do you feel that this particular week or month you can be partially excused because of a confusion in your love life?

Next, a little drastic action. Promise yourself that you'll do a thing at a certain appointed and allotted time and do it at that time regardless of any incidents, any trivial necessities that seem to arise. Pretend for a minute that you actually do get situated to write that theme at 9:00 sharp. You're kidding yourself, as usual, that you have good intentions of finishing the assignment, but you find your pencil is broken. Resist the vacation of trotting to the pencil sharpener! Use that stub inside your pocket. A few hardships will encourage more careful planning and budgeting of time. One has to learn to ignore constant excuses made to himself.

Exuses

Excuses are the brand of a chronic procrastinator. Even the fact that the telephone operator wasted time for you, or dinner wasn't ready on time, or your dress needed pressing ("Of course you want me to look neat, don't you")—all sound pretty flat when you realize that you have been timing everything on the basis of perfect, uninterrupted conditions. After all, everyone is subject to the same variables of time, distance and human behavior.

(Continued on page 8)
For Every One of Us

It Ain’t Necessarily So

You’re enrolled at Iowa State College. You think the next four years are planned for you—that you’ll follow much the same pattern as your roommate or your pal across the hall. You will find many things could happen to you. From a survey made of 5000 students enrolled during the years 1949-1950 and 1950-1951, these percentages prove that it’s up to you.

WHAT ARE YOUR CHANCES?
Graduating from Iowa State College ........... 45
Being a C.O.B. (Chip-off-the-old-block) (son or daughter of an I.S.C. graduate) .... 13
Earning a scholarship ....................... 4
Obtaining a long term loan .................. 7
Obtaining an emergency loan ................. 25
Living in a dormitory ....................... 55
Living in a sorority ......................... 26
Commuting to I.S.C. ......................... 11
Being employed within 2 months after graduation .................. 58
Being placed by the Home Economics Placement Office as a current graduate ... 56.5
Married within 6 months after graduation .................. 25
Working after marriage ...................... 30
Being employed after earning an advanced degree .................. 91
Being a homemaker after earning an advanced degree .................. 7.8
Marrying an I.S.C. graduate .................. 20

Tomorrow Is Yesterday
(Continued from page 3)
An eye-opening fact about deadlines is that deadline means only the last possible moment a thing is due! The excuses always seem to be made when the deadlines are past. Probably a project is all the more welcome if it is completed sometime before the deadline. And if that sounds useless, just do it once and experience the wonderful feeling of self accomplishment.

Let’s all set out on a crusade to outgrow our habit of procrastination. Let’s set our own deadline for this crusade—the sooner the better!

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