

The goals of this session are:

- To start a conversation about procrastination
- To guide adaptive reframing of thoughts and beliefs that present as barriers to action
- To introduce planning and coping strategies for initiating and completing tasks
- To develop distraction management techniques

At the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Analyze your own reasons for engaging in procrastination
- Identify your common cognitive blocks and improve task initiation
- Implement long-term planning strategies
- Analyze your common distractions and take steps to decrease their impact

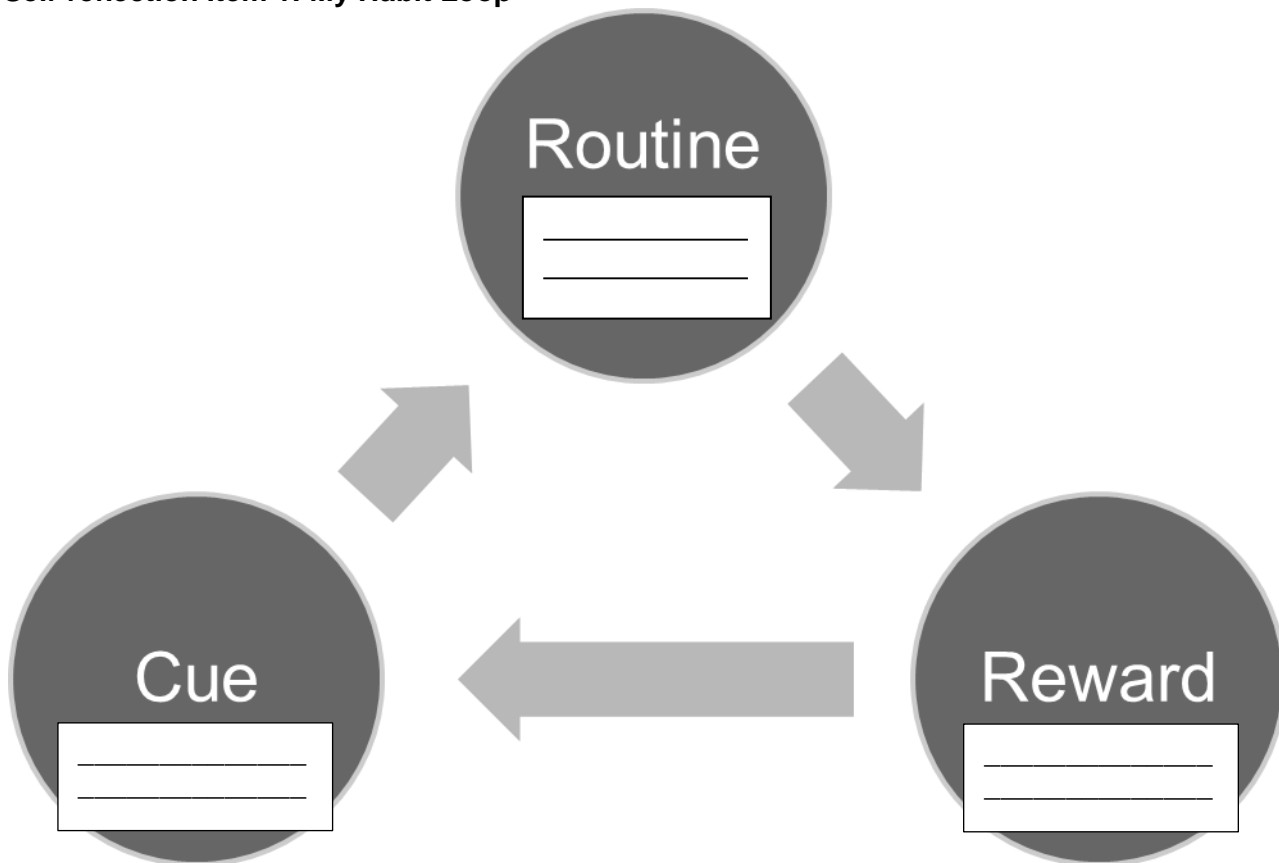
Procrastination is...

The action of delaying or postponing something

Habit is...

A behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition or physiologic exposure

Self-reflection Item 1: My Habit Loop



Self-Reflection Item 2: My Common Procrastination Cues

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear of feeling overwhelmed | <input type="checkbox"/> Desire for control | <input type="checkbox"/> Not fun or interesting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear of failure | <input type="checkbox"/> Desire for rest | <input type="checkbox"/> Not in the right mood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear of success | <input type="checkbox"/> Desire for freedom | <input type="checkbox"/> Too much effort |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear of not meeting your own expectations | <input type="checkbox"/> Desire to optimize working conditions or schedule | <input type="checkbox"/> Distractions (i.e. environmental, cognitive, emotional) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear of not finishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Desire to find the “right” place to start | <input type="checkbox"/> Not a priority |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear of not meeting external expectations | | <input type="checkbox"/> Other “productive” tasks available |

Self-Reflection Item 3: Identify a Strategy to Try (Circle at least 1 strategy to try)

1. **Forgive yourself for procrastinating in your past**

By forgiving ourselves for procrastination in the past, we reduce the risk of repeating the pattern of procrastination in the future.

2. **Set a timeline**

Focus on starting rather than getting stuck by worrying whether you can finish it. Set a plan in motion so that you can specify time for completing all of the things on your to do list.

3. **Promise yourself rewards**

If you undertake a difficult task on time, consider rewarding yourself! Make sure you notice how good it feels to finish and check something off of your “to-do” list.

4. **Ask for support**

Call a friend or family member to offer you support to get things done (or started) when it feels tough. Or try using an app.

5. **Try the 5-minute or less rule**

Prevention is a great strategy to try—even with procrastination. So, if you come across a task that takes less than a few minutes, do it right away to avoid tasks piling up.

6. **Rephrase your internal message**

Power-up your internal messages by telling yourself “I choose to” or “I will” rather than telling yourself “I have to” or “I should.” When you take ownership of your projects you can feel more in control of your workload.

7. **Reduce external distractions**

Try turning off digital devices that lure you off track or selecting an environment that helps you to focus. Distractions often slow down our pace or impede progress.

8. **“Eat the elephant beetle”**

Sometimes we spend the whole day dreading (and being distracted by) a task that we can tackle. Clear the path to focus on things that are enjoyable by taking on the “elephant.” You’ll probably realize it’s actually only an elephant beetle.

There's an app for that!

- **Procraster**
This app prompts you to identify your blocks to action and then helps you to break down large tasks.
- **Focuswriter**
By simplifying your visual space, focuswriter decreases distractions and supports time awareness through goal setting and timers.
- **SelfControl app**
If distractions bog you down, SelfControl app can help by blocking common social media and other technology distractions for a period of time you determine.
- **Strict Workflow**
Integrating the pomodoro technique right into your laptop, Strict workflow structures time and offers rewarding breaks at regular intervals.

Cognitive Distortions are...

Inaccurate thoughts that reinforce negative thinking and/or emotions

Chunking is...

Chunking is the process of taking large tasks and breaking them down into smaller pieces.

Self-reflection Item 4: Task “chunking”

Think of a task on your “to-do” list and the steps needed to complete the task. Estimate the time required for each step of the task. Set a time to have each step completed.

TASK: _____

Basic steps needed to complete this task:

Time needed to complete this step and deadline:

1)	_____
2)	_____
3)	_____
4)	_____
5)	_____
6)	_____
7)	_____
8)	_____
9)	_____
10)	_____

Are there rewards for completing this task? Are there consequences if you didn't complete the task?

Self-reflection Item 5: Manage Distractions

What do you get distracted by?

What can you do to manage (or eliminate) your distractions?

USC Chan Division of Occupational
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To schedule an appointment with an occupational therapist, please contact us at 323-442-3340 or OTFP@chan.usc.edu

What is Lifestyle Redesign®?

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We can help you with:

- Stress and anxiety management
- Time management & procrastination
- Organization
- Focus strategies & study skills
- Social or dating anxiety
- Regular physical activity
- Healthy eating routines
- Healthy sleep habits
- Lifestyle balance
- Headaches
- Weight management
- Ergonomics

Keck School of Medicine Wellness Resources

- For upcoming wellness events, please visit <https://ksom.usc.edu/wellness/>
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- Please contact Dr. Chantal Young, Director of Medical Student Wellness, with any concern at any time.
Email: chantal.young@med.usc.edu
- For any urgent mental health concerns, please contact the on-call counselor at the student health center 24/7 by calling 213-740-9355.