The word “occupation” refers to how individuals occupy their time, which largely consists of habits and routines.

So what are the habits and routines we can modify, to be conducive to overcome procrastination?
Objectives

• What is procrastination?
• Why do we procrastinate?
• How do we begin and complete projects with less stress?
Procrastination

What is it?

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To voluntarily delay an intended course of action *despite expecting to be worse off for the delay* (Steel, 2007)

- Sabini & Silver argued that postponement and irrationality are the two key features of procrastination. Putting a task off is not procrastination, they argue, if there are rational reasons for doing so.
A mechanism for *coping with the anxiety* associated with *starting or completing* any task or decision

(Fiore, 2007, p. 5)
Something we all do sometimes
Tortoise vs. hare - It was about the question of whether you'd prefer to work fewer hours over more days, or more hours over fewer days.

This approach seems different from procrastination. With procrastination, people feel as though they should be working, and they wish they could work, but somehow they can't make themselves. They aren't choosing to hold back; they can't force themselves forward until the deadline is so urgent that they must act.

Maybe naturally, the first step is towards accepting a natural sprinter mentality -
So, why do we procrastinate?

- To feel in control
- To protect our self-worth
- To avoid something we fear
- To experience temporary relief from stress

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- To protect our self-worth: We procrastinate when we fear a threat to our sense of worth and independence. When we believe that work is part of our identity, judgment of our work is judgment of ourselves. By procrastinating, we protect ourselves.

- Out of fear: fear of failure, fear of being imperfect (perfectionism), fear of impossible expectations, fear of being overwhelmed, fear of not finishing, or fear of success (if you succeed at a task, more may be required of you, etc.)

- Because procrastination is rewarding: The reward is temporary relief from stress

- Out of rebellion: If you feel powerless and a task is placed on you, you can rebel by delaying the task completion. Procrastination may be a way to have power and control in your life
This Coping Strategy Can Also Become A Habit
Seeking emotional relief, a break, reprieve

In some cases just acknowledging that you’re feeling overwhelmed may help
• Cat video
- Cue – school task that is anxiety provoking or boring
- Routine – scroll through social media
- Reward – temporary relief

- Cue – any school task
- Same routine despite not needing the relief
How do we stop procrastinating?

1. Pay attention
2. Pick a strategy
3. Experiment
4. Evaluate
How do we stop procrastinating?

1. Pay attention
2. Pick a strategy
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- Notice your reasons for procrastination
- Identify immediate cues
- Describe the procrastination routine
Notice Your Reasons for Procrastination

- Fear of feeling overwhelmed
- Fear of failure or success
- Fear of not finishing
- Fear of not meeting expectations
- Desire for control
- Desire for rest
- Desire for freedom
- Desire to optimize conditions
- Distractions
- Not interesting
- Too much effort
- Not a priority
- Other “productive” tasks available

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• Implement stress mgmt techniques
• Acknowledge the stress and fulfill your unmet needs in alternative ways
• Improve time mgmt
What are your cues?

- Discomfort
- Anxiety
- Overwhelm
- Uncertainty
- Fatigue
- Frustration
- Hunger
- Boredom
- Loneliness
- Lack of a plan
- Lack of clarity
- New/creative thoughts
- Requests
- Interruptions
- Checking phone
- Checking social media
- Running into a friend
- Finding anything else that needs doing

- Doesn’t even need to be the discomfort – can just be the anticipation of discomfort
Focus on the first step - try working on the first step for 5 minutes only
  - i.e. putting on your tennis shoes for the gym,
  - Opening up your note book to study
  - Making a grocery list

Practice deep breathing
How do you procrastinate?

Enjoyable:
- TV
- Web Browsing
- Apps
- Friends

Productive:
- Less Urgent Tasks
- Less Important Tasks
- Tasks for Other People
- Learning

Frustrating:
- Worrying
- Perfecting Needlessly
- Laying About
How do we stop procrastinating?

1. Pay attention
2. Pick a strategy
3. Experiment
4. Evaluate

- So now that you’ve paid attention, next pick a strategy
Pick a Strategy

Address the reason

Avoid the cue

Change the routine
Address the reason

Notice Thought Errors that Increase Anxiety

- **Catastrophizing:** “If I don’t get an A, then I’ll keep not getting As, then I’ll never get a good match, and then I’ll never be happy with my work.”

- **Filtering:** Focusing on the negative, not seeing the positive

- **Polarizing:** Black-and-white, All-or-nothing, Success-or-failure

- **Overgeneralizing:** “That thing that happened today; that’s what always happens to me.”

• Cognitive distortions
Address the reason

Notice Thought Errors that Increase Anxiety

- **Personalizing:** See a friend frown during a conversation, then think: “I shouldn’t have said that. Now they don’t like me.”
- **Magnifying:** Increasing the importance of something small
- **Minimizing:** Denying the importance of something that matters.
- **Emotional reasoning:** “I feel ashamed, therefore, I must have done something wrong.”
- **Magical thinking:** Expecting rewards and fairness

● Cognitive distortions
Address the reason

Get Some Perspective

» Question the thought error
» Gather evidence
» Check in with a friend or mentor
» Rate from 1-100
» Find the silver lining
• It’s not about denying yourself! It’s about getting in touch with what you really want and need and being realistic with yourself!!
Address the reason

Be Realistic

- Acknowledge the impossibility of perfection
- Focus on what works for you
- Avoid attempts to “Micro-optimize”
- Forgive yourself for past patterns and learn from them

- It’s not about denying yourself! It’s about getting in touch with what you really want and need and being realistic with yourself!!
Address the reason

Be Mindful of Your Self-Talk

- Avoid “I should” ➔ Try “I will” or “I prefer”
- Avoid comparisons ➔ Focus on your own needs, strengths, preferences, and process

- Who can you ask about it
- What you choose to do
- When you choose to do it
- Where you choose to start it
- How you choose to do it
So you do get those moments of relief -
Avoid the Cue

Plan to work on things you would avoid when your energy is best.

When is your energy best?

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Avoid the Cue

Avoiding digital distractions

• Put the phone away
• Close tabs
• Turn off notifications
• Uninstall apps
• Use the Forest app
• Use the Freedom tool
Avoid the Cue

*Avoiding bodily distractions*

- Start with a relaxation technique
- Have healthy snacks
- Bring a water bottle
- Get adequate rest
- Bring a sweater
- Take movement breaks
- Use ergonomic equipment
- Write down distracting thoughts

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Change the Routine

Seek Clarification

- Send an email
- Set up a meeting
- Ask a professor
- Ask a classmate
- Read the syllabus
Change the Routine

*Break it down*

1. Describe the scope of the task
2. Identify the sub-tasks
3. See if the sub-tasks have sub-tasks
   (it's called “chunking”)
Change the Routine

Break it down

4. Estimate time required to complete each step
5. Multiply by 1.5
6. Assign deadlines for chunks
   (work backwards from final deadline)
Change the Routine

Start Anywhere

• There is no perfect place to start.
• There are probably many goods one.
• Likely all of them will get you somewhere.
Change the Routine

When in Doubt, Pause on Purpose

- Practice deep breathing
- Analyze the barrier
- Recognize the need
- Try one of the strategies
Now Experiment & Assess

You can do it.

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OT Session Topics

- Time Management
- Healthy Eating Routines
- Physical Activity
- Lifestyle Balance
- Stress Management
- Relaxation
- Meaningful Leisure
- Ergonomics
Thank you!

Questions?

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