

*Los Angeles Harbor College  
Life Skills Center*

**Tips for Overcoming Procrastination**

**Procrastination** means “*putting off until tomorrow what can be done today...*” and in the process not delivering your best effort in school and personal matters. Understanding why you procrastinate can help you take control of procrastination.

**Common Reasons for Procrastination:**

- **Not understanding the assignment and feel shy about approaching the instructor to ask for clarification.** Most instructors at LAHC are very approachable people who want to help students. Please give us a chance. Ask questions in class, after class, during our office hours. We really care about students and want to see you succeed!
- **Fear of Failure:** We are aware that we can't control other people's responses to our work; imagining the exposure, the potential rejection can feel awful. Procrastination can be a way of protecting our self-esteem: “If I don't do well on an exam, it's because I didn't study; if I do well, I'm a genius because I didn't study” - It's like a double insurance policy.
- **Fear of Success:** Sometimes we fear success – What might happen if I were successful? What might people's expectations of me be then? Would my friends accept me? Can I accept praise, pressure? What will happen if I get my hopes up? Do I deserve success?
- **Perfectionism:** Having impossible standards is a set up for failure. It can discourage you from even starting! It can feel safer to do nothing than try, take a risk and possibly fail. Of course, if you don't try at all, that's a failure of a different sort!
- **Belief that time pressure produces your best work:** It can be hard to get started until the pressure mounts and anxiety is highest. There can be a lack of trust in having a schedule that allows you to complete a certain reasonable amount of work every day.

**Techniques to Avoid Procrastination**

- **Staying connected with your values and goals** keeps you motivated. Remember why you're here and keep your dreams close to your heart.
- **Create a schedule** and prioritize important tasks
- **Break down tasks** into smaller and more manageable chunks; then do the chunks in order, one by one
- **Reward yourself** for your successes and accomplishments. Rewards are far more effective than punishment
- **Get help!** Ask your instructors when you are having difficulty with assignments
- **Find a study partner and/or study group** and use it. Others can help motivate you.

**Conclusion**

- **Experiment** with these strategies to find out which ones work for you
- **Continue** to do what works, discard what doesn't
- **Be patient**, give yourself time to change
- **Celebrate** small steps!

*Please come see us at the Life Skills Center for individual coaching in avoiding procrastination and attend our regularly offered workshops. We have much more to teach you about how to avoid procrastination.*