
CHAPTER 6

The Problem of Procrastination and Self-Control

*Why We Can't Make Ourselves Do
What We Want to Do*

Onto the American scene, populated by big homes, big cars, and big-screen plasma televisions, comes another big phenomenon: the biggest decline in the personal savings rate since the Great Depression.

Go back 25 years, and double-digit savings rates were the norm. As recently as 1994 the savings rate was nearly five percent. But by 2006 the savings rate had fallen below zero—to negative one percent. Americans were not only not saving; they were spending more than they earned. Europeans do a lot better—they save an average of 20 percent. Japan's rate is 25 percent. China's is 50 percent. So what's up with America?

I suppose one answer is that Americans have succumbed to rampant consumerism. Go back to a home built before we