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Successful Procrastination

Light softly enters the room through a small, glass window. Tattered notebooks are strewn about, each containing brilliant ideas that could potentially change the world. Large, unframed paintings sit crookedly on the dusty floor. A bearded man sits at a desk in the center of the room, furiously scribbling into yet another notebook.  This is the room of Leonardo da Vinci, the man who would later be considered by the world as nothing less than a genius. Leonardo was one of the greatest procrastinators the world has ever seen, yet what he did accomplish became arguably some of the most groundbreaking, influential pieces of history (Pannapacker). How is it possible to put certain things off that should be done, and yet make those things some of our best work? Da Vinci understood how to manage his procrastination, and became successful. To become successful, we must learn to procrastinate the Da Vinci way.

Leonardo had a great number of ideas, most of which would not be conceptualized. His notebooks show he was thinking about flying machines, military tanks, a machine gun, the human body, to name just a few (Pannapacker). But Leonardo rarely completed any of the great projects he sketched in his notebooks.

The key to being able to complete the projects we ourselves engage in is not merely procrastinating, but procrastinating effectively. By understanding how to procrastinate effectively; new levels of accomplishment can be reached. Procrastination can give us useful insight into our lives, teach us to effectively wait, and help us distinguish the difference between needed and unneeded delay.

Many live life with regret for what they have not done, or have done imperfectly, instead of taking satisfaction with what they have done. Leonardo may have not completed many of his works; however it is obvious he was doing something he was passionate about. Great success and passion are fundamentally intertwined, and procrastination can help us find that passion.

If we look at the activities we engage in while procrastinating, we find ourselves doing something we really love, our own passion. Something we are so passionate about, we are willing to put off other important matters to do. It would make much more sense to *have* to do the very thing we are doing during procrastination. If our procrastinational activity became what we *needed* to get done what would happen is clear; success. Work would no longer be something mediocre and halfhearted; it would be passionate and soulful. If we want to unlock our genius and become as successful as possible, the first place to look is our procrastination.

Procrastination is just a universal state of being for humans. We will always have more things to do than we can possibly do, so we will always be imposing some sort of unwarranted delay on some tasks. The question is not whether we are procrastinating, it is whether we are procrastinating well (Gambino).

Procrastination as it is known today is strongly discouraged universally, even if it is done well. Parents do not tell their children to wait to clean up their room. College professors do not tell their students to take some time off and cumulate ideas for upcoming assignments. People are accustomed to getting things done as quickly and efficiently as possible, which isn’t always a good thing. Taking time to think before acting is seen as almost old fashioned. This principle is easily visible in the consumer market of today. Generally, it is not seen as necessary to do much shopping around in hopes to find the best possible price. Buying one of the first items found makes sense. A rushed decision is made because the consumer believes time is being saved (Ardell). Time may have been saved, however the possibility of the consumer having buyer’s remorse, because insufficient research was done, is higher. Procrastinating decisions in this manner allows for research, critical thinking, and making the choice one will be pleased with for the largest amount of time.

The idea of procrastinating, or waiting, was never meant to portray the negativity it now does (Kanus). Historically, for human beings, procrastination has not been regarded as a bad thing. Greeks and Romans generally regarded procrastination very highly. The wisest leaders embraced procrastination and would basically sit around and think and not do anything unless they absolutely had to (Gambino).

Most people would agree they don’t have much time just sit around and think. Many have more to accomplish in a day than they can possibly get done, yet some seem to find a balance. Successful procrastinators don’t procrastinate less than most people; they simply do it more efficiently. If one can understand a few basic principles of successful procrastination, they will find there is sufficient time for all things they *want* to get done. Just as the Greeks and Romans of old, time will be found to amply think, and do.

Beginning to successfully procrastinate involves knowing how to separate tasks that can be put off from those that cannot. For example : One receives a speeding ticket and it is the last day to go before a court to pay the fine, but also a research paper is due in an advanced English class the same day. While it may, or may not, seem obvious which task should be placed first in priority, a focus on civil duties should come first. A successful procrastinator would not write one word of the paper, thus allowing ideas to cumulate in the mind. While thinking about the paper a trip to the court to pay the fine would be in order. Upon returning from the court, time would be given eat, relax, and allow ideas to further develop (Knaus). All of this would happen before writing one word of the paper, yet the paper would still be completed. Separating tasks into levels of importance will vary from person to person, however many are universal and easy to distinguish.

Understanding how to avoid procrastination of important matters that cannot be set aside, as spoken of above is critical. If one finds themselves involved in a task that is boring, mundane, or making the mind wander, a change is in order. For example : Writing an English paper in one’s room, on one’s bed, staring at powered down game consoles, laptop, and cell phone, chances are high an excuse will be made to engage in unsuccessful procrastination. Generally, a person would find themself asleep, adrift on Facebook, or playing hours of a time consuming game.

A successful procrastinator would take a different approach. He or she would take a quick nap, before beginning the paper. After the nap, a look at face book, and even a round or two of a favorite game would be appropriate. When these potential killers of good procrastination have been taken away, even if for a short time, the paper will receive attention. If the above is not enough, it may be necessary to do things that one may have never considered. Making a game out of the task and rewarding ourselves when we have completed it, possibly by getting back on Facebook, is a possibility. Whatever the circumstance may be, finding a way to focus on what needs doing, and enjoying it as it gets done is imperative.

Enjoying procrastination, while also getting things done, hinges on one important principle; stop worrying. If all time is spent worrying about the work that hasn’t been done, then procrastination isn’t being enjoyed. The point of productively introducing procrastination into your life is being missed. Just let the mind rest, clear it of worries, and focus on enjoying the distractions. Work is only as serious as it is made. Procrastination lets one enjoy the little things in life that would otherwise pass by. Enjoying what one is doing will make the work the highest quality possible. Seeing as how everyone procrastinates in some form or another, enjoying procrastination is absolutely essential.

Potentially harmful delay can be turned totally around into successful procrastination. When we understand our procrastination and why we do it, we will get a rare glimpse into our individual personalities and interests. Applying successful procrastination will teach us how to effectively wait, thus giving us time to make clearer decisions and allowing the creative process more time to work. By following the steps of constructive delayed response, we can get done first the things that are more important, enjoy doing things we used to hate, and slow down the rapid, stressful pace of our lives.

The seemingly endless negativity that surrounds procrastination is misleading and unfair. Constantly putting off important matters can be harmful; however by using procrastination correctly it can be a good thing, and bring about positive changes in the lives of those who effectively apply it (Subotnik). Everyone has the potential to become as Leonardo da Vinci, the only thing holding us back is ourselves. To fully enjoy the experiences in life deemed as most important to an individual, successful procrastination will be a necessary implementation. Those who understand these principles will enjoy a greater measure of personal satisfaction, and thus personal success.

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