PROCRASTINATION: It's Never Too Late

Procrastination is putting off until tomorrow what you should have done yesterday. It is a strategy to cope with situations that produce fear and anxiety. Procrastination is something that can be dealt with successfully. The following are some procrastination ‘traps’ and options for managing them more effectively.

1. Lack of Interest in Subject
   - Read actively, converse mentally with the author, question his/her viewpoint, anticipate his/her conclusions, attempt to disprove his/her ideas.
   - Learn to use an effective method of study. Surveying and raising questions about the material arouses interest in what is to be read.
   - Be alert to ways in which your course relates to your life and the current scene.

2. Lack of Goals for Each Study Session
   - Plan ahead exactly what you expect to accomplish in a study session.
   - Plan an enjoyable activity as a reward for a job well done.

3. Poor Reading and Study Skills
   - Go to the SASS (Student Academic Success Services) office for ways to develop these skills.
   - Research / Learn new, more effective approaches to textbook study.

4. Trouble Getting Started
   - Have a definite place to study and be properly equipped with pencils, paper, dictionary, etc.
   - Have a definite starting time that you enforce. The sooner you begin, the sooner you will be free to do other things.
   - A brief review is helpful in getting started.

5. Daydreaming (an escape from work)
   - Have only one course’s material on your desk at one time.
   - Keep a scratch pad on your desk. Jot down your irrelevant thoughts and come back to them later.

6. Worrying About Personal Problems
   - Go to the appropriate student service agency for help - University Counseling Services, Financial Aid, Health Center, etc.
   - If you have trouble deciding on a major, go to the University Counseling Services. They will help you evaluate your aptitudes and interests.

7. Deadlines
   - Keep a calendar of assignment deadlines and appointments.
   - Make a schedule with definite times for studying and completing assignments.

8. Isolation
   - Meet with a classmate and get started.
   - Hire a tutor. Visit the T.A..
   - Talk about it to a significant other.
9. **Difficulty Sticking with a Schedule/Planner**
   - Make an Un-Schedule
     - Fill in a week's schedule with only essentials – e.g., classes, work, exercise.
     - Then write down any minutes you do study.

10. **Feeling Discouraged – Not making enough progress**
    - If you solved 5 problems but not 10, if you read 30 pages instead of 50, recognize that you are making progress (doing something) and give yourself some credit.

11. **Feeling Dissatisfied with the Quality of Work Completed**
    - Your work will not be a Mona Lisa every time ...
    - Grades are not a measure of self-worth. Your assignment is not equated with worthiness as a person.

12. **Difficulty “Settling-in” to Study**
    - Choose an item, like a hat, that you put on when (and only when) you are studying, or an item that you place on your desk as you study.
    - Relax your body before starting to study.
    - Relax your body and give yourself an affirmation and/or an image that will motivate you.
    - Imagine that your brain is filled with the subject that you are going to study and that there is no room for anything else. See that the entrances to your mind are blocked by that subject.

13. **Difficulty Getting Started**
    - Find a transition activity that will move you in a positive direction towards studying. For example, if you have a paper to write, break the task down by starting to copy a favorite passage or poem from a book.
    - Once you have the momentum for writing, you will find it easier to change subjects and begin your paper.

14. **Wasting Time**
    - Develop a contract that suits your needs. For example, if you observe that it takes you 30 minutes of procrastinating before you begin to study, contract with yourself to reduce that time to 20 minutes by defining a motivating reward (or punishment).

15. **Ineffective Habits / Patterns (that prevent work from getting done)**
    - After analyzing your procrastination pattern, develop a positive pattern that will carry you across the rough spots. For example, instead of watching T.V., light a candle of your favorite color, gaze into the flame and say to yourself, "I am ready to begin studying now."
    - The effects of an intervention like this will grow stronger each time you do it.

16. **The Consistent Put-Down**
    - If you consistently put yourself down or, in other words, have a negative tape going, sit down sometime and write out the script as thoroughly as possible. Keep it in a drawer.
    - The next time the tape starts up in your mind, pull out the script and tell yourself, "I have already written this out in great detail. I no longer need to go through it all again. It's here on paper, so I can skip it and move on to the next step."