



# MONEYWISE

VALUING PEOPLE. VALUING MONEY.

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## THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

### TIPS TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY AND STOP PROCRASTINATING

The biggest obstacle to getting things done is often procrastination. Procrastination means avoiding a task (or even several tasks) we should be focusing on. There are four general reasons we procrastinate:

- **Emotional procrastination.** We can use procrastination to try to soothe our emotions about a task. People may feel frustrated or bored with a task, anxious about the end results, or insecure about being able to complete the project successfully. Fear of failure adds stress that can fuel procrastination.
- **Physical procrastination.** When we don't feel the best physically, it's hard to be productive. Being hungry, tired, or sick makes it hard to focus. By looking at our physical state, we can see if any underlying factors are halting our productivity.
- **Procrastination as protection.** When our bodies experience stress, we want to protect ourselves. Maybe you've heard of the fight, flight, or freeze response to perceived danger. Today, our bodies think work stressors are as "dangerous" as attacks by wild animals were to our ancestors. Procrastination, in the short term, protects us from emotional or physical "dangers" associated with whatever task we



are putting off. Procrastination is an example of the freeze response as it helps us avoid feeling anxious or overwhelmed.

- **Procrastination from uncertainty.** Sometimes we put off tasks because the directions are unclear. We might delay a task or project because we don't have enough information, resources, or guidance. Perhaps this is your first time working on a topic and you are not sure where to start. When working on something new, it may be frustrating or confusing, especially without proper training or instructions.

Of course, sometimes we may dread a task simply because of what it is, such as cleaning or paperwork. It is common to put off chores that do not hold our interest, even if they are simple or necessary.



## LIKE OTHER BAD HABITS, WE MUST BREAK THE CYCLE OF PROCRASTINATION INTENTIONALLY



### COMBATING PROCRASTINATION

Like other bad habits, we must break the cycle of procrastination intentionally. To replace unproductive behaviors with more efficient ones, we must choose better routines. One method for breaking this cycle is to look at our urge to procrastinate when it first appears. What is causing you to procrastinate? Are you overwhelmed by expectations or confused by instructions for a project? Are you hungry, angry, lonely, tired? What about bored or stressed? Once you have an idea of what is fueling your procrastination, you can better fight it.

### PITFALLS OF MULTITASKING

Multitasking may also be stalling your productivity. Research suggests that multitasking keeps our brains from deeply focusing on one topic. It is like our minds go to commercial break before the show's plot has time to fully develop. Instead, train yourself to fully commit to one task until you reach a stopping point. This could be a natural break, such as when you complete a portion of a larger project or fully complete a task. It also could be a designated amount of uninterrupted work

time. That means no emails, phone calls, social media, meetings, or toggling between browsers or projects.

### MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

Like multitasking, distractions can derail our train of thought and stall our productivity. Each time we are distracted, we use mental energy to resume where we left off before the interruption. This takes effort and time. Like the commercial break example, interruptions eventually make us lose interest in the original show. Our minds tire from pushing "pause" then "play" over and over, and instead we tune out. Avoid this trap by regularly blocking time to work with few interruptions. The more you can limit distractions, the more productive you will be.

### TIME WELL SPENT CURRICULUM

For more information on ways to increase productivity and maintain a better work-life balance, contact your county Cooperative Extension office. Ask your FCS agent about the program, *Time Well Spent: Productivity Skills for Success*, developed by Kentucky Family and Consumer Sciences Extension.

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