

**2018 Brief Therapy Conference—
Habits and Addictions**

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Treatment of Procrastination

- What's one thing you're procrastinating on? What's something you've been putting off?
- Patient may say he or she has been putting off
 - weeding the garden
 - catching up on filing
 - working on taxes or paperwork for insurance
 - writing a paper or report
 - etc.

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Would you press the Magic Button?



Double Paradox
Procrastinating on X

Advantages of Procrastinating	Disadvantages of Getting Started

Double Paradox
Procrastinating on X

Advantages of Procrastinating	Disadvantages of Getting Started
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy • Avoid anxiety • Better things to do • More fun things to do • Not enough time right now • It's a pain in the butt • Can do it later—not urgent • World won't come to an end if I put it off • I don't feel like doing it right now 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety provoking • It's a hassle • Task is overwhelming • More important things to do • Life is short • Great game on TV right now • Can do it later! • Not enough time to finish right now • I can wait until I'm in the mood

Acid Test

- Therapist can say, "Given all the advantages of procrastinating on X, and all the disadvantages of getting started, it's not clear to me why you'd want to stop procrastinating."

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Specificity

- If patient insists he or she really *does* want help, therapist can say, "I'm happy that you want some help with your procrastinating on X. What time would you like to stop procrastinating on X?"

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Miracle Cure Question

- Make sure the patient selects a time today, like 6 PM this evening, not tomorrow. Then the therapist can ask, "What type of help would you be looking for at 6 PM?"

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Miracle Cure Question

- Patient will nearly always say, "I need help with motivation. I keep putting it off because I'm just not in the mood."
 - What will you say next?
 - Can we help with motivation?

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Negotiation

- Therapist might say:
 - "We're not offering motivation this week. I'd be glad to help you get started, but you're not entitled to feel motivated until *after* you've started and you're well into the task."
 - "However, I can help you get started, if that would be of interest to you."

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Errors to Avoid

- Don't cheerlead
- Don't try to help
 - Your efforts to "help" will encourage the patient to continue to procrastinate
 - And now the "failure" will be yours!

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Little Steps for Big Feet

- Let's assume the patient wants help on getting caught up on his filing
- Break the task into tiny steps and list them
 1. Sit down at my desk
 2. Grab some manila folders from the file drawer
 3. Pick up one item from the pile of unfiled stuff
 4. Label the folder
 5. Put the item in the folder
 6. Put the folder in the file cabinet

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Little Steps (cont'd)

- Paradoxical Inquiry
 - Ask if the patient needs help with step 1, step 2, etc.

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Five-Minute Rule

- Would you commit to working on this task for five minutes ONLY from 6:00 to 6:05?

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Problem-Solution Sheet

- List the problems that will interfere with your decision to spend 5 minutes on your filing tonight at 6 PM

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Problem-Solution Sheet

Problems	Solutions

Problem-Solution Sheet

Problems	Solutions
1. A friend might call.	
2. I'll tell myself I need to eat some snacks to settle down before I start.	
3. I'll tell myself I'm too anxious or not in the mood.	
4. I'll remember something more important that I have to do.	
5. The kids might interrupt.	
6. There might be something great on TV.	

Problem-Solution Sheet

- If the patient can't find a solution to any of the "problems," do NOT try to help.
 - Instead you can say, "Well, it sounds like that's not a problem you can solve. Perhaps we can work on something else."

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The "I Stubbornly Refused" Technique

- Ask patient to leave one of two messages on your answering machine at 6:05
 - "Mission accomplished."
 - Or "I stubbornly refused."

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Additional Anti-Procrastination Techniques

- CBA
 - Therapist must "Sit with Open Hands"
- Anti-Procrastination Sheet (page 47 of handout)
- Tic-Toc Technique

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Procrastination Cost-Benefit Analysis
Cleaning the garage today

Advantages of procrastinating	Disadvantages of procrastinating
1. I can do something more rewarding, like watch TV. 2. I can do it another day when I'm more in the mood. 3. I won't feel overwhelmed and anxious. 4. I can frustrate my wife. 5. She may get tired of the mess and clean it up herself. 6. I can show that I'm special and above such chores. 7. I can show that I won't be bossed around.	1. I'll feel anxious and guilty. 2. I won't have the satisfaction of getting started. 3. The garage will still be a mess.
65	35

Anti-Procrastination sheet
Break the task into small steps.

Step	Predicted Difficulty (0 - 100)	Predicted Satisfaction (0 - 100)	Actual Difficulty (0 - 100)	Actual Satisfaction (0 - 100)
Sit down at my desk				
Look through the pile of documents				
Put one document in a file folder				
Label the file folder				
Put it in my file drawer				

Tic-Toc Technique

TICs (Task Interfering Cognitions)	TOCs (Task Oriented Cognitions)
1. Tomorrow will be a better day. 2. I'm not in the mood. 3. Five minutes will just be a drop in the bucket. 4. There's something important on TV. 5. I have more important things to do. 6. It will make me anxious. 7. I deserve a break. I've had a hard day.	