Procrastination

Perceptions + Thoughts = Feelings → Behavior

People go from A to C or A to D in one step without recognizing that their thoughts (B) about their perceptions (A) are causing their feelings (C) which lead to their behavior (D).

Regardless of how your procrastination gets started, you can still change by changing your conscious thoughts.

However, changing a habit takes lots of time and practice. In order to change your habit of procrastination, you must work at it.

The limbic system of the brain (feeling part) always lags behind the neocortex (thinking part), so there will be cognitive dissonance (i.e. knowing what is right but feeling wrong). Old habits compete with the new; they don’t just die off. Changing your habit of procrastination will take determination.

Are you ready?

How to Stop Making Excuses

Mental—Think of your favorite excuses. What is irrational about these excuses? Dispatch each excuse with a rational thought. For example:

**Excuse:** I need excitement. I can’t stand to sit and stare at this book. It’s boring. So I’ll put it off until it seems more exciting.

**Dispute:** In what way do I need constant stimulation? Why can’t I stand boredom and monotonous jobs? When will this ever seem more exciting?

**Excuse:** They shouldn’t expect me to read the article and write a paper on the last chapter all before the next class. It’s so unfair. I’ll just wait until I feel like doing it. Then it will seem easier and I won’t mind the assignment so much.

**Dispute:** Why shouldn’t they give me work that I don’t feel like doing? If they only gave me work when I wanted to do it, then nothing would ever get done? It is unfair, but I’ll certainly learn the material if I do it. It may seem like a good idea to wait until I feel more in the mood to do it, but will I really benefit by waiting?
Excuse: I really don’t feel very inspired to write this essay now, but I have to get started if I want to turn it in on time. But to really do it well, I have to wait until inspiration strikes me. Then I do really great work.

Dispute: Why do I need inspiration to write a good essay? Why must I do this one superbly? If I put off the essay now, will I really feel more inspired to do it later?

Excuse: I am so burned out. I am afraid I am going to have a mental breakdown if I don’t get time away from this. Between my family, the classes, and my two jobs I don’t have time to breathe. It is so awful that I have all this to do at once.

Dispute: Granted I have a great deal of work now, but what makes it too much? Why must I suffer a breakdown if I don’t get some time away? What evidence exists that I truly need a vacation? How did I get all these things to do at once; was it because I put off everything I had to do until now?

Physical—Think of one task that you have avoided. How can you use the following to finish your task instead of making excuses?

Planning
Getting help from others
Setting a deadline
Making a list
Rewarding yourself

Emotional—When you visualize images of yourself doing the task, practice the feeling of doing it right. Do this for ten minutes, four times every day.

Summary—Five Steps:

1. Think of your excuse and dispute any irrational thought.
2. Make a mental picture of what you want to do.
3. Plan and carry out the task, rewarding yourself for each small part. (You will have to fight cognitive dissonance here).
4. Practice the feeling while visualizing the task (ten minutes/four times a day).
5. Continue with consistent practice.

Note: If your mental images stir up the old emotions, calm yourself with rational thoughts and relaxation exercises. Then begin your mental images again.