

PROCRASTINATION SITUATION: TIPS FOR PARENTS

I wanted to finish this procrastination article but I keep putting it off...

At one time or another everyone has avoided finishing a task. It simply appeared too difficult, too unpleasant, or too time consuming to tackle all at once. Psychologists have come up with many reasons why students choose to procrastinate. Disorganization and poor time management are usually cited as a major cause of procrastination. The student doesn't know how to start or how to budget his or her time to ensure that the task will be completed. Other students use procrastination to avoid feelings of stress, anxiety, failure and inadequacy (If I don't start I can't be held accountable for poor work.). Still others want to avoid doing something that is unpleasant or too time consuming.

Whatever the cause of the procrastination, the results are always the same. The task is either totally avoided or only partially completed. As strange as it seems, the procrastinator does derive some advantages by procrastinating. Avoiding an unpleasant task, having more free time, maintaining the status quo, having a built-in excuse for failure, etc. are all rewards a procrastinator derives.

Parents are often at a loss as to how to help their child overcome procrastination. Too often it becomes a habit that is very difficult to break.

- ▶ The first step is to recognize that procrastination is taking place.
- ▶ As a parent, be aware of the projects and assignments that your children must accomplish and help them set a reasonable time frame for completing the work. Children have poor sense of the time needed to complete a task.
- ▶ Help your children break the task into smaller more manageable tasks. The entire project may seem overwhelming in its entirety.
- ▶ Help your children recognize and obtain all materials necessary to complete the project. Looking for a pencil or other time wasters are a specialty of procrastinators.
- ▶ Praise your children for partial completion of the task. Make them feel good about the work they have achieved. Don't feed into their desire for perfection. This is a school project not a doctoral dissertation.
- ▶ Help eliminate distractions. Set a regular time each day to work on long-range projects and stick to that time frame.
- ▶ Plan a reward for the completion of the task. If your children know that something good will happen at the end of the task, they are more likely to want to complete it.