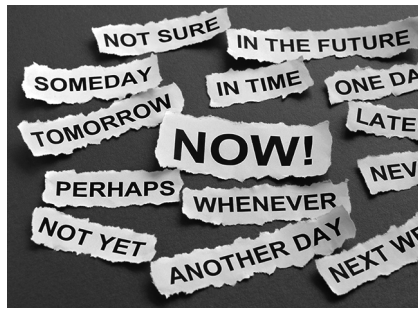


How to be more efficient

adapted from an article by Maddy Savage and Ginevra Boni

- 1 Whether or not we care to admit it, we're all familiar with procrastination: waiting until the last minute to catch up with pressing tasks, often leading to inferior or incomplete work. The antidote – while easier said than done – is simply to start on your assignments sooner, long before the cut-off time so that your work reflects your full potential. But in your quest to beat procrastination, is it possible to go too far?
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- 2 David Rosenbaum, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Riverside, certainly thinks so. His research focuses on the perils of 'precrastination', the tendency to rush too quickly into tasks. It can result in an expenditure of unnecessary effort that could be avoided with a bit of planning – 9, haste makes waste.
 - 3 As opposed to a procrastinator, who might leave an inbox full of emails untouched until the next day, a 'precrastinator' reads and responds to each of them first thing in the morning. Even if they know most of the emails are unimportant, they choose to clear them off as soon as possible.
 - 4 So why do people 'precrastinate'? Rosenbaum says that for most, it's tough to resist reaching for low-hanging fruit. If something is immediately available to you, you're instinctively wired to go for it. Personality traits such as conscientiousness, eagerness to please and high energy can predict 'precrastination' behaviours, Rosenbaum says, but the evolutionary impulse behind them is universal.
 - 5 The real downside of 'precrastination' comes when, in your rush to finish, you encounter the naturally higher chance of doing your work incompletely or inaccurately. In the case of emails, sometimes waiting to respond can show respect for careful thought over expediency, especially if the content of the message is emotional.
 - 6 Of course, 'precrastination' is not without its benefits, but it's critical to do so only when it makes sense. Chronic 'precrastinators' must also realise that it's OK to set trivial things aside, because they will not require huge mental energy later in the day, Rosenbaum says.

- 7 He argues that the managers of today would be wise to acknowledge that it's not always best to do everything as quickly as possible. "It should be agreed in our society that it's okay to smell the flowers," he says. "To be deliberate, mindful and to be allowed to slow down."

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