

READ

Read this article about procrastination.

Seize the Day

Picture this scenario: It's late Sunday afternoon. Jane is making dinner. Ben needs the paperwork for this year's taxes. It has **to be given** to the accountant tomorrow.

BEN: Jane, have you got the paperwork ready for the taxes? I have **to take** it to the accountant first thing in the morning.

JANE: Ben, the Garcias are coming in about an hour. I'm trying **to get** dinner into the oven. I can't stop **to find** the paperwork now.

BEN: But honey, I've got **to have** it. You said you'd do it.

JANE: Why didn't you tell me you needed it tonight? I didn't know I had **to get** it together so soon.

BEN: I really did plan **to remind** you about it, but I **forgot to**. What are we going **to do**? Can't you stop for a little while?

JANE: If I stop cooking, I won't have enough time **to finish** before the Garcias get here. Tell you what: you go look for it, and if you can't find it, I'll help you later this evening.

Does this kind of situation ring a bell?¹ It illustrates the problem of procrastination. I interviewed psychiatrist Robert Stevens **to find out** more about this problem.

REPORTER: Dr. Stevens, I want **to ask** you if there's such a thing as a procrastination syndrome.

STEVENS: Well, I don't know if we can call it a syndrome, but procrastination is widespread and can be a very serious problem for some people.

REPORTER: Can we start with a definition of procrastination?

STEVENS: Of course. **To procrastinate** is literally **to put things off** until tomorrow. It's a postponing of events until a later time. But unlike the word "postpone," which has a neutral sense, the word "procrastinate" has a negative connotation. There are sometimes good reasons **to postpone** things, but never **to procrastinate**. Procrastinating has the sense of avoidance.

REPORTER: All right. Now what causes people **to procrastinate**? Laziness?

STEVENS: That's a popular idea, but I'd have **to say** that laziness isn't the major cause. No, I think that fear is really the most important force that motivates people **to put things off**.

REPORTER: Fear? Can you explain?

STEVENS: Well, procrastinators want **to live up** to other people's expectations. They're afraid **to fail** or **make mistakes**, or maybe they don't want **to be rejected**. Interestingly, procrastination has nothing **to do** with education. Some of the most learned people are among the worst procrastinators.

REPORTER: What would be an example of that?

STEVENS: Well, let's see... Suppose a professor—a woman we'll call Blanche—has been planning a lecture. She's mentioned the lecture to colleagues but hasn't told them the time and date it will take place, which would be the straightforward thing **to do**. Either consciously or subconsciously, she expects **to fail**, so she delays telling people until the very last moment. Her colleagues expected her **to have told** them before now. When she didn't, they forgot about the event and made other plans. It's too short notice for most of them **to come**. Blanche's fear has caused things **to turn out** like this. She feels bad about it, but she doesn't know how **to change**.

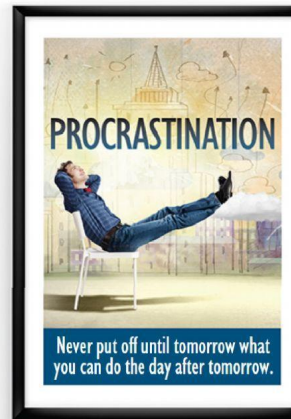
REPORTER: Well, what if a procrastinator would like **to change**? What would you advise that person **to do**?

STEVENS: Getting a procrastinator **to change** can be a tough nut **to crack**,² but I recommend three principles for my clients. The first is never **to put off** until tomorrow what needs **to be done** today. **Not to avoid** painful or difficult things is the second. They're part of life. The third is contained in the Latin phrase *carpe diem*—"seize the day." I try **to consider** every experience an opportunity. I don't want people **to take** unnecessary or foolish risks, but I do advise them **not to put off** living. They may not get another chance.

REPORTER: Well, Dr. Stevens, thanks for a stimulating discussion.

¹ ring a bell: remind you of something

² a tough nut to crack: a difficult problem to solve



AFTER YOU READ

A VOCABULARY Match the words in **bold** with their meanings.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| _____ 1. Picture this scenario . | a. cause |
| _____ 2. The word <i>postpone</i> has a neutral sense. | b. direct and simple |
| _____ 3. Procrastination is widespread . | c. meaning |
| _____ 4. The word <i>procrastinate</i> has a negative connotation . | d. common |
| _____ 5. This situation illustrates the problem of procrastination. | e. possible situation |
| _____ 6. That would be the straightforward thing to do. | f. shows the meaning of |
| _____ 7. Is there such a thing as a procrastination syndrome ? | g. not showing feelings |
| _____ 8. Fear can motivate people to put things off. | h. pattern of behavior |

B COMPREHENSION Read the statements. Check (✓) *True* or *False*.

- | | True | False |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Jane is not going to stop dinner preparations. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. The word <i>postpone</i> has a positive sense. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. To procrastinate is literally to put things off until tomorrow. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. Dr. Stevens believes it is sometimes appropriate to procrastinate. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. Dr. Stevens believes that fear is the major cause of procrastination. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6. According to Dr. Stevens, procrastinators are afraid to fail. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7. Dr. Stevens believes it is permissible to avoid difficult or painful things. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 8. Dr. Stevens thinks it is good to consider every experience an opportunity. | ☐ | ☐ |