

Get Started

Learn how to beat the annoying habit of procrastinating and just get started



Module 5

Self high-five

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How to Use this Workbook

This workbook is part of a self-help program which intends to help you overcome procrastination. The program is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and consists of reading and multimedia materials, reflective exercises and practices. It covers topics such as psychology of procrastination, ways to analyse your own procrastination and beat it, and practical tips to motivate yourself and make your tasks more manageable.

The program is a series of 5 learning modules, each takes you roughly 30 minutes to go through. We recommend completing each module in one sitting and doing 1 module weekly for 5 consecutive weeks.

You can find a list of resources in the community [here](#) when you need support. Counselling and Psychological services are available at HKU for current students. It is free-of-charge, professional and confidential. Don't hesitate to seek help if needed.

Enquiries and Feedback

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Module 5

Self high-five

Introduction

Holy cow, you made it all this way?! That's awesome :D

We need to take a moment to celebrate, so please do the following:

1. Raise your left arm above your head.
2. Straighten the fingers of your left hand.
3. Raise your right arm above your head.
4. Straighten the fingers of your right hand.
5. With a good amount of speed and force, touch your right hand to your left hand.

And this, my friend, is how you self-five ;)



- ▶ This module will take around 30 minutes
- ▶ We recommend a quiet, relaxing place
- ▶ Have these things at hand:
 - Headphones (if you can't play the video out loud)
 - Your calendar

How did it go?

Now that you've (nearly) come to the end of your journey, we're very curious...

Which changes have you noticed in yourself (your behaviour, thoughts or feelings) since starting this programme?

Have you been applying everything you learned, from recognising the procrastination cycle, to changing negative thoughts, to using all the practical tools & tricks? What works well and what doesn't?



Rome wasn't built in a day

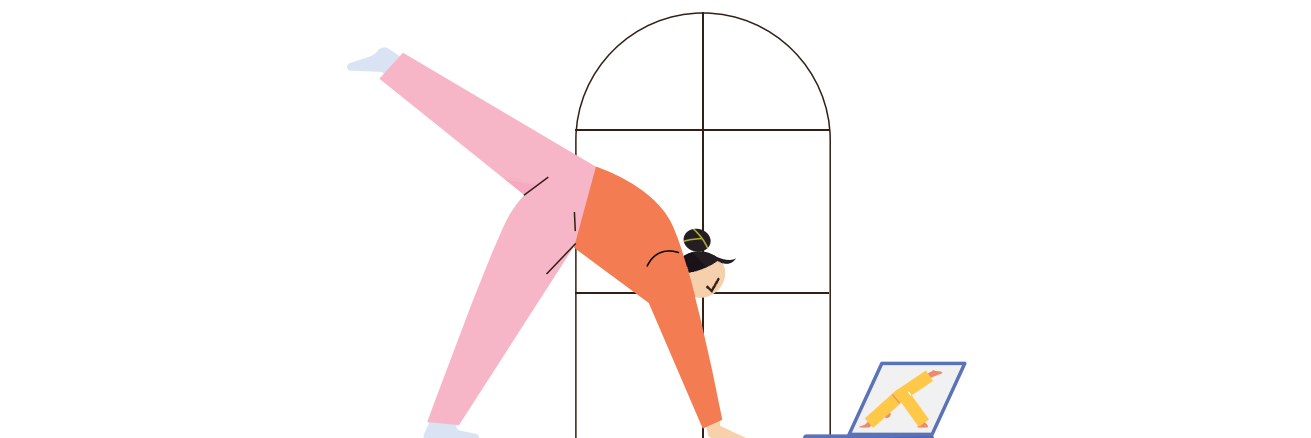
Let's take a moment to talk about expectations

You've nearly completed this programme, you've worked hard and whether you've gotten better at tackling procrastination or not - the fact that you persevered already proves progress.

Which is amazing! You should be very proud of yourself.

Changing any habit is difficult, and takes lots of time and dedication. And sooner or later, you will find yourself procrastinating again. When that happens, it's crucial you don't get discouraged.

So let's work on a back-up plan for when you find yourself procrastinating. Here are two ways you can deal with it (The video transcript is available on p.13):



1 Intention statements

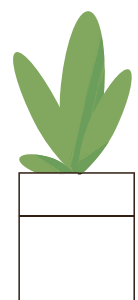
So now take a minute to think: what situations around procrastination do you anticipate? Perhaps you will be seduced by your phone, or give in to some Procrastination Brain excuses? Then think how you can stop this from happening in the future.

Write the intention statements that will help you deal with setbacks:

If...

Then...

Now repeat, repeat, repeat! Intention statements only work if you remember them when the time comes, so better make sure you commit these to your memory somehow (or possibly keep them somewhere in sight). Next time the 'if' situation happens, tell yourself what you will do instead.



2 Be your own BFF

Self-compassion is about being kind to yourself and treating yourself like you would a friend.

It's not always easy being nice to ourselves when we screw up, but research has shown over and over again that self-compassion is much more effective than self-blame.

So next time you feel bad about procrastinating, try doing one small act of kindness for yourself.



What small acts of kindness can you come up with? Write as many as you can.

Need inspiration for small acts of kindness?

- Call that one friend that can always make you laugh or cheer you up
 - Buy your favourite snack (like a decadent chocolate cake)
 - Take a bath or a nice, hot shower
 - Play a fun (video) game
 - Watch a funny YouTube video
 - Practice your hobby (playing music, arts and crafts, painting)
 - Put on your favourite song and sing / dance along
 - Give someone a compliment
 - Give yourself a compliment
 - Go for a walk in the park
 - Buy some flowers to cheer up your room
 - Treat yourself to a nice manicure (or do your own nails)
 - Organize a sports session with friends
-

4 types of success

Now that we've looked at what to do when things go wrong, we also need to focus on when things go right!

One thing we humans are notoriously bad at is recognising our own successes. One reason for that has to do with our definition of success.

Most people only feel something is a 'success' when they achieve one of their goals.

And of course that is definitely a success, but there are 3 more types of success.

Taking action - any kind of action

What if your friend had a crush on someone and gathered all their courage to ask them out. That would be pretty cool and brave of them, right - **regardless** of whether the person said yes or no. Because the action counts too, not just the outcome. Taking action is definitely a type of success!



Gaining new insight

Successes aren't just about physical actions and consequences. Any time you learn something new, every 'Aha' moment, every time you go: "I hadn't thought about it like that!" - all of these are successes. That's because new insights allow you to grow and move beyond where you were before.



Acknowledging a mistake and learning from it

If anything is not a success, it's making a mistake - right?

Wrong. Any mistake that you learn from is actually a great success. First, because you were smart enough to recognise the mistake in the first place, and second because you just learned a very valuable lesson, one that will prevent lots of mistakes in the future. So making a mistake can also be a great success!



Learning to recognise all these as successes adds a lot of positivity to your day.

So now write 5 successes of TODAY (but more than 5 is also allowed). They don't have to be related to procrastination, they can be about anything at all!

Need inspiration?

- I got up when my alarm clock went off (instead of snoozing)
 - I'm doing this module
 - I exercised today
 - I ate a healthy breakfast/lunch/dinner
 - I worked on my paper for more than an hour
 - I actively participated in class
 - I learned something about myself, namely ...
 - I noticed I was procrastinating and broke the Procrastination Cycle
 - I finally sent out a job application
 - I realised I snapped at my partner (for no real reason) and I apologised
-

Try to get into the habit of recognising successes by writing 5 successes each and every day. It only takes 2 minutes a day, and after a while you will start to notice that your days are filled with big and small successes!



Reward yourself

Lastly - and it's so weird to think that this is the very last 'lastly' - you should reward yourself for coming all this way. That's a great success!

If you did the 'Panic Monster to the rescue' module, you probably remember how rewarding yourself can be a great motivator. And finishing this programme deserves the biggest reward of all, if you ask me.

Take a moment to think about how you can celebrate finishing this programme

What would you like to do? Who would you like to invite? Here are some ideas to inspire you. Of course, due to the corona pandemic what is and isn't possible changes constantly and please keep any current guidelines in mind.

If you like	Get inspired
Food & friends	Organise a picnic. Have everyone bring some snacks and their favourite (board) games, and don't forget a speaker and some good music.
Partying & music	Check out what's going on at nearby venues and get tickets to your favourite festival / music concert / event.
Getting pampered	Do a spa day or get a fancy manicure, or maybe a long massage.
Laughing	Go to a (stand-up) comedy show, or a funny movie at the cinema (and buy a big popcorn!).
Travel	If you can afford a city trip abroad: go for it! But as a plan B, why not take the train to a nearby city you haven't been to before?
Feeling fancy (corona-proof)	Have a fancy home dinner date with your partner or close friend. Set the mood (some candles perhaps), get all dressed up (wear your fanciest outfit), and order a nice home delivery.

So, what will you do to celebrate this success of finishing the programme? Who will you invite?

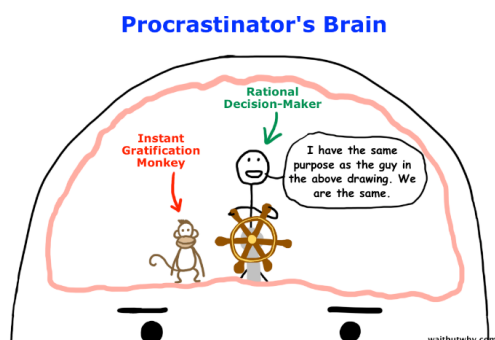
Make sure you add it to your calendar so you don't forget to celebrate!

Wrap-up

And on that positive note, it's time to say goodbye. Kind of, anyway.

This is the end of the last module, but that doesn't mean you can never come back here. You can come back any time to repeat a module.

Here's everything you've learned in a nutshell:



Module 1

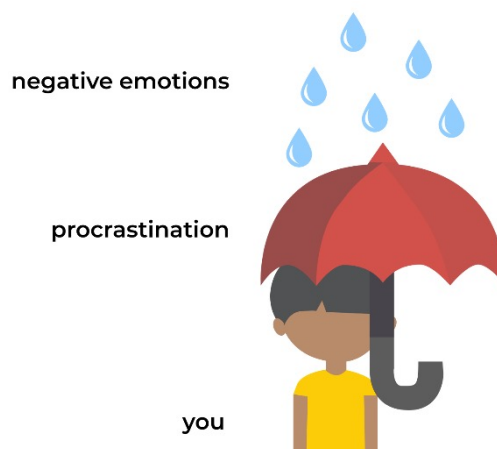
You, the monkey and the monster

You saw what it's like inside the mind of a fellow procrastinator.

Module 2

Protection level: 5000

- Procrastinating is **not** the same as being lazy, and everyone procrastinates at **some** things.
- Procrastination is a choice, which we make because it 'protects' us from negative emotions associated with starting or finishing a task.
- So procrastination is actually a very effective coping mechanism in the short term.
- In the long term, however, the downsides usually outweigh the benefits.



A task needs to be done



Associated with the task is an automatic negative thought



You feel guilty about it, so Procrastination Brain comes up with excuses



You avoid the negative thoughts and feelings with a 'monkey action'

The thought leads to a negative feeling



Module 3

A chat with Procrastination Brain

- You procrastinate when there are negative emotions associated with a task.
- These negative emotions are usually triggered by automatic, often subconscious thoughts.
- To avoid these thoughts and feelings, we come up with excuses as to why it's okay to procrastinate.
- The way to beat procrastination is to break this Procrastination Cycle.

Module 4

I've got to break free

- The steps to breaking the procrastination cycle are:
- First, recognise and analyse the automatic thoughts that cause you to procrastinate: do they contain thinking errors?
- Once you spot a thinking error, come up with arguments why the thought might not be (totally) true.
- Then formulate a new, more helpful thought to replace the old thought.
- Once you've replaced the thought, you can overcome procrastination and start! Do not focus on finishing a task, this only makes it harder. Instead, aim at starting - even if it's just a couple of minutes.



Module 5

Self high-five



- Habits like procrastination don't go away overnight, so it's completely normal to fall back into old patterns now and then.
- To prevent this from happening, you can formulate intention statements: IF ..., THEN ...
- If it happens anyway, be kind to yourself and treat yourself like you would a close friend.
- Keep noticing the 4 kinds of success: achieving a goal, taking action, gaining new insight, and acknowledging a mistake and learning from it.
- And lastly: celebrate your successes by rewarding yourself!

And that was it!

It's absolutely amazing that you've come all this way and we are very, very proud of you. We wish you all the best in the future and hope that everything you learned in this programme will be useful for a long time to come!

What did you think of this module? Please click [here](#) to let us know your views.



Supplementary information

Video transcript of “Intention statement and self-compassion”

There are two ways you can prepare yourself for a future in which you might end up procrastinating again: Intention statements, and self-compassion.

The first is through intention statements. An intention statement is an ‘if-then’ statement which you can prepare in anticipation of a challenging situation. These statements can help you get through the challenge successfully. Here’s an example.

Ashley always craved dessert after dinner but ended up eating way too much sugar most evenings. Her goal was to cut back, so Ashley came up with the following intention statement:

IF I crave something sweet after dinner, THEN I will make myself a cup of tea instead.

Whenever she craved dessert, she repeated her statement to herself and more and more often went for tea instead of cake. Mission accomplished!

The second way to prepare yourself is by practicing self-compassion.

Imagine something bad happened to a close friend: they got a bad grade on an important test and they’re very bummed out. You would be compassionate: you might hug them, reassure them that everyone gets bad grades sometimes, maybe you’d try to cheer them up by saying something nice, making a joke or doing an activity they enjoy together.

Now, think about the times you got a bad grade yourself. Did you do these things for yourself too, or did you beat yourself up, called yourself names and blamed yourself?

Self-compassion is about being kind to yourself and treating yourself like you would a close friend.

It’s not always easy being nice to ourselves when we screw up, but research has shown over and over again that self-compassion is much more effective than self-blame. So next time you feel bad about procrastinating, try doing one small act of kindness for yourself instead of beating yourself up. Call a close friend, treat yourself to your favourite snack, take a nice, hot bath - whatever works for you. Simply imagine how you’d treat a close friend, then do those things for yourself!