

Inside the Mind of a Master Procrastinator | Tim Urban | TED



Adapted Reading Passage

Tim Urban, a writer and blogger, shares his personal experience with procrastination, a common struggle for many. He describes his own tendency to delay tasks, even important ones like his senior thesis, which he ultimately wrote in a frantic 72-hour period. This led him to explore the science behind procrastination and discover the "Instant Gratification Monkey," a part of the brain that prioritizes immediate pleasure over long-term goals. This Monkey often takes control, diverting us from productive tasks with distractions like browsing the internet or watching videos.

Urban explains that while the Monkey thrives on short-term deadlines, its influence becomes more detrimental in situations without deadlines, like pursuing a career in the arts or working on personal relationships. In these cases, the Monkey's lack of urgency can lead to long-term unhappiness and regret, as individuals feel like spectators in their own lives. He argues that everyone procrastinates in some way, and it's crucial to be aware of the Monkey's influence and make conscious efforts to prioritize long-term goals.

Urban concludes by emphasizing the importance of recognizing our own procrastination patterns and taking action. He encourages us to visualize our limited time on a "Life Calendar" and consider what we're truly procrastinating on. By staying mindful of the Monkey's allure, we can make choices that align with our long-term aspirations and live more fulfilling lives.

Summary

- Tim Urban, a writer, describes his own experience with procrastination, where he puts off important tasks until the last minute.
- He explains that a part of our brain called the 'Instant Gratification Monkey' loves quick rewards and makes us want to do fun things instead of work.
- Urban encourages us to be aware of this Monkey and make choices that help us reach our long-term goals.

Key Vocabulary Words

procrastination (noun)

Definition: The act of delaying or postponing something that needs to be done, especially out of laziness or a lack of motivation.

Example: My procrastination led me to wait until the last minute to write my essay, which resulted in a lot of stress.

momentum (noun)

Definition: The force or speed with which something moves or develops.

Example: The team gained momentum after scoring their first goal and went on to win the game.

regrets (noun)

Definition: Feelings of sadness or disappointment about something that has happened in the past.

Example: He had many regrets about the choices he made in his youth.

realization (noun)

Definition: The act of becoming aware of something.

Example: She had a sudden realization that she had left her keys at home.

aware (adjective)

Definition: Knowing or perceiving something.

Example: Be aware of your surroundings when walking alone at night.

senior (adjective)

Definition: Relating to or being in the final year of a course of study at a high school or college.

Example: He was a senior in high school and was looking forward to graduating.

thesis (noun)

Definition: A long piece of writing on a particular subject, especially one written by a candidate for a university degree.

Example: She spent months researching and writing her thesis on the history of the American Civil War.

frantic (adjective)

Definition: Feeling or showing a lot of anxiety or excitement; wildly agitated.

Example: He was in a frantic rush to get to the airport on time.

divert (verb)

Definition: To cause someone or something to change direction or go to a different place.

Example: The police diverted traffic away from the accident scene.

spectators (noun)

Definition: A person who watches an event, especially a sports contest or a performance.

Example: The stadium was packed with spectators for the championship game.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. According to Tim Urban, what is one way that procrastination can lead to unhappiness in the long run?
 - A) Procrastination can lead to a feeling of being stuck in a rut and not making progress on important things.
 - B) Procrastination can lead to a loss of friends and family.
 - C) Procrastination can lead to a lack of sleep and physical health problems.
 - D) Procrastination can lead to a fear of failure and a lack of confidence.
2. What does Tim Urban suggest we do to help us be more aware of our procrastination habits?
 - A) Keep a journal of our daily activities.
 - B) Talk to a therapist about our procrastination.
 - C) Set realistic goals for ourselves.
 - D) Imagine our lives as a calendar and think about what we are putting off.
3. What is one example that Tim Urban gives of a situation where procrastination can be especially harmful?
 - A) When you are trying to finish a school project.
 - B) When you are trying to learn a new skill.
 - C) When you are trying to build a relationship with someone.
 - D) When you are trying to get a good night's sleep.

Short Answer Questions

1. What is the "Instant Gratification Monkey" and how does it affect our behavior?
2. Why does Tim Urban think it's important to be aware of our procrastination patterns?
3. What is the "Life Calendar" and how can it help us overcome procrastination?

Open-ended Prompts

1. Think about a time when you procrastinated on something important. What was it? What were the consequences of your procrastination? How did you feel about it?
2. Tim Urban describes the 'Instant Gratification Monkey' as a part of our brain that loves immediate pleasure. Can you think of any examples of this Monkey influencing your own decisions? How do you try to resist its influence?
3. Urban suggests that we can all benefit from visualizing our limited time on a 'Life Calendar.' What would your Life Calendar look like? What are some things you want to accomplish in your life? How can you make sure you don't procrastinate on these goals?