

Teach Your Teen How to Stop Procrastinating Homework (without Nagging)

by Winston Sieck - February 10, 2015

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“Trust me?”

You send him off to school. Drive him to soccer practice. Then there’s dinner. And, you know, a little TV.

Says he’s getting homework done. But there doesn’t seem to be that much. *Gets it all done in school.* Hmm. *Trust me.* Hmm.

You want to trust him. You don’t have time to review each assignment. And that’d go over like a lead balloon, anyway. Nagging is out. Major hassle. Tiny return.

But when the grades come back, you know you’ve got to do something. *Trust me* didn’t work.

You might think that getting things done has to do with grit or simple hard-nosed discipline. That he’ll wake up and do it, or he won’t. But this is far from the truth.

He’s got to learn how to stop procrastinating homework.

You can’t manage his time for him anymore. But he still needs support.

Supporting him to get his work done simply requires that you teach him a few [study tips](#) and time management techniques. Teach him how to stop procrastinating homework, rather than trying to manage his time for him.

It’s much easier because you coach him on tools and processes, without getting into the nitty-gritty of his business. This is a central idea of our [study skills course](#).

The procrastination cycle affects us all (or “It’s not just you, kid”)

You know what I mean by the procrastination cycle, right?

Say your son has a tough homework assignment. About geometry theorems. It seemed pretty complicated in class. He doesn’t get it right away, so he decides to put it off.

Later that evening comes. He puts it off again. Until tomorrow and then to the next day. Now he’s feeling like he really doesn’t know what’s going on in class. More assignments begin to slip, and class is less fun every day.

He's walking around with an uneasy feeling that he's not going to do very well in this course. And feeling like that, it becomes easy to procrastinate his homework even more.

Procrastination is a beast that feeds on itself.

And you've met that beast yourself, haven't you?

It shouldn't be too hard to feel some empathy. Procrastination haunts us all.

Can you think of a time when you didn't feel very [motivated to study](#) (or work)? A time when you were sorely tempted to put off the task until later? My guess is that you don't have to think that far back.

What was it about the task that gave you an itch to procrastinate? Did it seem too difficult, boring, or just tedious?

How did it turn out? Did you break the cycle, or did things get worse and worse?

You've got a story about procrastination. Think it through. Get it straight in your head.

Now, tell your teen all about it.

Don't worry if it turned out badly. It's fine to show a little weakness. We're all humans here.

My kids love and remember stories of my failures best.

The point is to empathize with your teen's struggle. Show him that you really do know what it's like.

Get momentum and spiral up

We all face the procrastination beast at one time or another. Yet, you have the benefit of experience. To get where you are now, you've figured out a few ways to overcome it.

You may not have them on the tip of your tongue, but they're there. You've internalized your tricks. They've become part of your habit.

It's time to bring them back to the forefront of your consciousness so you can pass them on.

Need some help?

Here are four ways to overcome procrastination. Share these tips with your teen.

1. **Nip procrastination in the bud.** Recognize this cycle early on, and imagine where it will lead you. By acting early, even if just to do a little, you can avoid the downward spiral.

2. **Set small goals to focus on**, rather than on a big task that seems like too much. Break the assignment or study activity into little pieces. Congratulate yourself as you finish a small task. Making a little progress will help increase your motivation to do some more.

3. **Make a deal with yourself**. Promise yourself a reward for finishing the task, or a reasonable chunk of it. Tell yourself that you'll watch some TV, listen to a song you like, or call a friend after you are done.

4. **Concentrate on the most recent tasks** when too much has piled up. Figure out what tomorrow's lecture is going to be about, or what homework assignment is due next, and put your energy into preparing for those. This way, you can enjoy a small win of a more positive class experience, because you understand what's being said a bit better and have turned in a more complete assignment on time.

Which of these have you used? Maybe at work, instead of school. Do they jar your memory for other tricks you use?

The harsh truth about how to stop procrastinating homework

We all have trouble with procrastination. At least now and then.

It's the same for your teen. And he's had less practice handling it. He hasn't picked up all the tricks you've come across for working through the sticky spots.

How can you help him get his tedious, daunting tasks done?

You can't.

Not directly, at least. He's got to learn to get himself unstuck.

But you can talk with him about procrastination. Empathize with his struggles.

You've know you've been there.

Think about what works for you.

Share your tips for getting things done (even when you don't feel like it).

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