

THE CAUSES OF LAZINESS AND PROCRASTINATION AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

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Abstract

Laziness is disinclination to activity, an indolence, despite having the ability to act. It is an attitude, and in some people, it is an attribute. Lazy people see no point in accomplishing anything. Procrastination is an act of voluntarily delaying or postponing things knowing fully well that there can be negative consequences in doing so. It is a habit and a tendency to postpone important and urgent tasks in favor of other things which are easier, more pleasurable, and less important. It is said that procrastination and Laziness are siblings who usually influence each other, and it is difficult to identify which one helped the other. This paper discusses various causes that make people procrastinate or become lazy. Understanding these causes is important so that these could be avoided for a better living.

Keywords – Laziness, Procrastination, Psychology, Philosophy, Islam

The causes of laziness

The human behavior related to laziness and procrastination is covered under psychology. Psychology is a scientific study of mind and behavior. Psychologists are rational and behavioral scientists who attempt to understand the role of mind of individual people and their social behavior. The areas of research under psychology cover, observation, perception, emotion, intelligence, motivation, personality, etc.

As per psychologists, laziness is a lack of self-esteem, a lack of discipline in life involving low self-confidence, and lack of interest in activity thinking about its uselessness. The causes of laziness could be physical and emotional both, as follows.

(i) Physical causes

(a) Lax lifestyle of the people is a contributing factor for laziness; like ignoring important and urgent tasks or delaying them to the last moment while spending time in watching movies, videos, and social media chats. Hours, days, and months pass without realizing that important works are being amassed to unmanageable level. If the mind is kept busy in unrelated things, it cannot focus on important issues in life.

(b) Depression can be a cause for laziness. Depressed people do not find energy to do anything. Over a period, they become hopeless of achieving anything in life.

(c) Exhaustion and stress are also the causes of laziness, as stressed people do not have mental energy and enthusiasm to accomplish anything. The fact is that lazy people get exhausted in doing unimportant things like keeping themselves busy on social media, playing video games or watching all kinds of videos and partying. When one is physically exhausted or stressed, his mind cannot work efficiently. He feels like taking rest without doing anything.

(d) Distractions are major reasons of laziness. When the mind is wandering over unrelated things while working on a task, one cannot complete the task and at some level feels frustrated and lazy and end up doing nothing.

(e) Lack of sleep or lack of proper rest also contribute to laziness.

(f) Multi-tasking also contributes to laziness. In an attempt to do several things simultaneously, people end up doing nothing and feel exhausted as their minds become confused and slow down.

(g) Lack of physical exercise makes a person get tired easily and he feels lazy for doing any meaningful work.

(h) Junk food is a contributing factor for laziness. Avoiding junk food and developing the habit of eating healthy food helps in keeping the energy levels high with which one can focus on important things. If the body does not work properly, it will surely make one lazy.

(i) Dehydration is also a cause of laziness. Drinking enough water ensures proper functioning of internal organs of the body, which helps the brain to engage in productive work.

(ii) Psychological causes

(a) Some people have a psychological barrier as they think that they cannot do a certain task. When a person is convinced that the task at hand is difficult, unattainable, he will see no reason to start it, which leads to laziness.

(b) Lack of motivation is one of the primary reasons for laziness. Motivation is an internal drive that desires change. It is an unlimited source of energy that keeps a person striving to pursue his goal. Lack of motivation can be the biggest cause of laziness. It prevents people from moving forward in life and they become unwilling to work.

(c) Absence of specific goals in life adds to laziness. If a person has no goal to achieve in life, he becomes lazy. The goals in life motivate a person to work hard to achieve his objective.

(d) Fear of responsibility and accountability proves to be a speed breaker for a person in accomplishing important tasks in life which also contributes to laziness.

(e) Fear of failure is another cause for laziness. Those who are afraid of failure, do not want to take risk in their lives. They should convince themselves that without taking a calculated risk, they cannot attempt anything new in their lives.

(f) Indecision often becomes the cause of laziness. Some people cannot make up their mind to do anything. They waste days, weeks,

and months without doing anything because of their inability to decide on the course of action.

Causes of procrastination

Procrastination is the long gap between intention and action. It is a habit and a tendency to postpone important, and sometimes urgent tasks, in favor of other unimportant things which are easier or more pleasurable. Procrastination has two essential components, (i) postponement, and (ii) irrationality because rationality in delaying a specific task does not come under procrastination.

Piers Steel who teaches at the University of Calgary, Canada, in a research study in 2007 concluded that procrastination is 'to voluntarily delay an intended course of action despite expecting to be worse off for the delay. He developed an 'integrating theory of motivation' (ITM) in cooperation with C.J. Konig of Zurich University, in 2006, which emphasizes time as a critical and motivational factor. It incorporates other theories like (i) expectancy theory, (ii) hyperbolic discounting, (iii) need theory, and (iv) cumulative prospect theory, etc.

The causes of procrastination and laziness often overlap each other. Following are the factors that contribute to procrastination.

(a) Emotional management is one of the primary causes to overcome procrastination. When people are in negative mood and are unable to overcome it, they delay the task at hand to an unknown future.

(b) The fear of failure also contributes to procrastination. Fear is a response of mind to a hypothetical threat. In this scenario, the mind has two options, fight, or flight. Flight is known as procrastination.

(c) When a person realizes his skill deficit in starting a task, it contributes to procrastination. In such a scenario, the professional approach is to work on skill development as part of accomplishing the task. What actually happens to a procrastinator is, he avoids effort in developing required abilities to undertake that task.

(d) People procrastinate when they are faced with complex tasks. Long and complex projects are unstructured. They need to be structured first into bits and pieces and then these bits and pieces should be attempted one after another. This way these projects can be accomplished.

(e) Academic procrastination of undergraduate students is often related with students who are concerned about comparisons with their peers. These students wanted to look to be competent by avoiding demonstrating inability in front of their peers. This fact has been highlighted the studies of Holly McGregor and Andrew Elliot (2002); Christopher Wolters (2003), Andrew Elliot and Judith Harackiewicz (1996).

In a study conducted in 1997 by Tice et al, procrastinators have been found to receive worse grades than non-procrastinators.

(f) Certain tasks are so complex that the thought of attempting them puts a person on off-putting. However, research has shown that these are the result of poor emotional management and mental negativity. These contribute to procrastination.

(g) The level of enjoyment in doing a work plays a positive role in accomplishing the task. People would do odd jobs more happily than others who are doing easier jobs but are victims of boredom.

(h) Lack of motivation plays a bigger role in procrastinating certain tasks. A habitual procrastinator does not see motivated to spend extra energy on tasks that are not necessary for his survival.

(i) Some people are the victims of indecision. They cannot decide on things, therefore end up in procrastinating important tasks. It is observed that getting started is the biggest obstacle for a procrastinator which prevents him from action.

(j) Some people are the victims of perfectionism which contributes to procrastination of complex tasks. They visualize the difficult parts of the projects and fearing not able to complete them with perfection, procrastinate indefinitely.

(k) Some people are the victims of self-criticism. They think that they cannot engage in certain

tasks and this constant pressure in their minds hampers their ability to do a job effectively. Thus they procrastinate indefinitely.

(l) Fatigue, exhaustion, and depression also contribute to procrastination. In some people, procrastination causes depression and in others it is vice versa.

(m) In some people, fear of success contributes to procrastination.

(n) Distractions also play a significant role in procrastination.

(o) A work without a deadline can never be accomplished. Self-imposed deadlines help in avoiding procrastination.

(p) Some people are unable to prioritize their tasks and keep on delaying things infinitely. Similarly, some people are the victims of indecision. In the same way, some people are disorganized in life. All these contribute to procrastination.

How to avoid laziness and procrastination

The reasons for laziness and procrastination often overlap each other. We have provided major reasons of laziness and procrastination above. We need to identify the reason behind our laziness and try to overcome it. The moment we work on it, it will open great many vistas in our lives to progress and spend a prosperous and happy life. We provide below a few points in this context.

(a) It is important to find fun in the task we are aiming to undertake. We do not have to be assertive and should continue doing our work without hampering other usual activities. This way we will not feel overburdened.

There are two principles in this context, viz., (i) pleasure principle, and (ii) reality principle. The pleasure principle seeks immediate gratification. This is the reason people prefer to act on things which are not important, but these give them a kind of pleasure and increased dopamine level.

According to Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), an Austrian neurologist and founder of

psychoanalysis, the 'reality principle' is the ability of mind to evaluate the reality of the world and act upon it accordingly by postponing instant gratification. In essence it is the ability of mind to give preference to reason over passion.

(b) Emotional management is the key. We need to evaluate our emotional response to our unproductive work. What is our emotional response to our mental dissention? What excuses put us off emotionally. Then we should decide strategies to cope with them to continue our good work.

This is known as negative emotional coping response (NECR). The balanced approach between reason and passion (fun) helps in avoiding procrastination. Coping responses include, (i) change of location of work, (ii) awareness about the importance of the task, (iii) assessing the consequences, (iv) comparing the satisfaction if one completes the task rather than delaying it, (v) rationalizing the possible external forces that may hamper the work, etc.

(c) Fixing attainable deadlines in accomplishing tasks helps in being productive. Give reasonable margins for unexpected emergencies that may delay the tasks at hand. When we are positive to all these issues, the task at hand can be accomplished happily.

(d) It is important that we avoid self-criticism, negative self-talk as this is counterproductive.

(e) Think of a reward which could be physical or psychological which will be available on accomplishing the task. Imagine how good you will feel after accomplishing a challenging work. Use it as a motivator for the task at hand.

(f) Evaluate the cost of procrastination, how things may go wrong and how you may repent for the lost opportunity. A rational approach will motivate you towards being productive in life.

(g) lead a positive lifestyle which has less distractions from social media and other unproductive activities. Take proper care of your health, do physical exercise to keep fit for a happy life.

(h) A concrete master plan of life could help in achieving the desired results. Divide this plan into smaller plans and work on them one after the

other. Once you achieve the smaller plan, you will feel motivated to continue the larger plan.

Islamic perspective on laziness and procrastination

The Arabic term used in the Quran for laziness, inactivity and sluggishness is كَسَلٌ (kasal). The opposite of laziness is Tazkia-tun-Nafs. In Islamic Tazkia Nafs consists of (i) understand the psychology of the functioning of our brain to rid ourselves from the animalistic desires and develop human values, (ii) physical and mental exercises to develop focus of attention towards Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), (iii) know about Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), His attributes and His signs in the cosmos and develop absolute trust in Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and His Apostle (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). Islam emphasizes that life is short and human beings have been sent to prepare for their life after death, so they cannot remain idle and lazy. Among the principles of Islam, (i) Salah, (ii) Zakat, (iii) Fasting, nothing can be delayed as each of these have been undertaken at an appropriate time. There is a time fixed for each of the 5 prayers daily which needs to be undertaken at their appropriate time. So is the case with Fasting in the month of Ramadhan and Zakat that has to be paid every year without fail.

The Prophet (s) said, *O Allah, I seek your refuge from worry and grief, from incapacity and laziness, from cowardice and miserliness, from being heavily in debt, from being overpowered by others (who will stop me from by regular Islamic responsibilities).* (Bukhari).

Quran promises a big reward for Muslims for their good deeds (that must be performed regularly, on time).

It is in Quran - Whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, provided he is a believer, We (Allah) will surely cause them to live a good life, and reward them in accordance with the best of what they have done. (An Nahl – 97)

How laziness and procrastination can be used positively

It is observed that while everyone feels lazy at times and procrastinate, the successful people used these traits to their advantage. A very busy professional in any field of activity needs to take proper rest, stay at home, in bed, to recuperate for the following day's work. In this scenario, feeling lazy and staying in bed is an opportunity for him to feel energized for the following day's work. Everyone needs vacation to rejuvenate oneself. It is important to take a break, often, from the busy schedule of life to recuperate oneself for a long work.

Similar is the case with procrastination. When an important task is at hand, it is important that it is not started in a hurry in a haphazard way. One has to plan for it, think about its pros and cons and the difficulties one will face in the course of accomplishing this task. For this purpose, procrastination is important and essential aspect of the task at hand.

Conclusion

We have discussed in detail what is laziness and procrastination. Also, the causes of laziness and procrastination have been described. It is important that every reader evaluates himself in the light of the above details to benefit from them.

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About the Author



Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri is well known all over the world for his explanation of Islamic Tawheed, Sahih Iman, Sahih Islam and Sahih Ihsan. He is a scholar, historian, and poet. He is the author of Tafseer-e-Asedi, Irshad Al Asedi, Fusus Al-Iman and over 1000

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