**Procrastination-Rules and Assumption**

**Need To Be In Charge**

Some people have rules like “I *must* be in charge at all times”, “I *must* always call the shots in my life”, “Things *should* be done my way”, “I *shouldn’t* have to do things that I don’t want to do”, or “I *shouldn’t* have to do things just because someone else says so”. These rules reflect the type of person who resents not being in control, not being independent or not holding the power. This person often assumes that “if I am not 100% in charge of what I do, then I am weak”. You can imagine that for this person, when they are faced with a task they don’t want to do that is imposed on them by someone else (e.g., a supervisor, teacher, family member, partner), then they will feel angry and resentful because they see themselves as not in control. They may then use procrastination as a way of easing their anger and sense of weakness and helping them feel like they do have the power, because they are doing (or not doing) the task on their own terms.

**Pleasure Seeking**

Some people live their lives according to the principle that pleasure is paramount. They are impulsive, seek out pleasure and have difficulty tolerating boredom. These people may have rules like “life is too short to be doing things that are boring or hard, fun *should* always come first”. They may have assumptions like “if I forgo fun, then I will become a boring lifeless drone”. These rules and assumptions reflect a need for instant gratification, and a difficulty accepting ideas like “short term pain for long term gain”. For this person it is hard to look beyond the short term and be patient enough to wait for any long term pay off. You can imagine that for this person, when faced with an uninteresting task (e.g., work project, assignment, household chore, doing the weeks budget), they will feel frustrated and bored. They may then use procrastination as a way of alleviating boredom and frustration and helping them seek out the pleasure they so desire.

**Fear of failure or Disapproval**

Some people put a lot of pressure on themselves to complete tasks or goals to a very high standard, sometimes even demanding perfection of themselves. The problem is that when they demand such extraordinary efforts, they often fear that they will fall sort, and conclude that they will either fail or someone will disapprove of them. These types of people may have rules like "I *must* do things perfectly”, “I *must* not fail”, or “I *can’t* have others think poorly of me”. They may have assumptions like “if I try, then I will only fail”, or “if I put my work out there, then others will think badly of me”. You can imagine for this person, when faced with a task that is going to be evaluated in some way (e.g., exam, report, art work, socialising, making a lifestyle change), they predict they will fail or others will judge them negatively, and as such they feel anxious, fearful or embarrassed. Their fears may paralyse them from being able to do the task, and procrastination may be used as a way of avoiding their fears of failure or disapproval. That is, a motivation for their procrastination may be that you can’t fail or be judged negatively by others, if you never follow through on the task in the first place. As an aside, another underlying reason for procrastination that is often mentioned is **fear of success**, which often is really a delayed fear of failure in disguise (e.g., “if I succeed, then more will be expected of me and I won’t be able to cut it”).

**Fear Of Uncertainty Or Catastrophe**

Some people fear the unknown. They need to be very certain of what lies ahead, and if they are uncertain they may predict catastrophe as a way of preparing themselves should the worst happen. These types of people may have rules like “I *must* be certain” or “I *should* be prepared for the worst”. They may hold assumptions like “if I take action, then something bad will happen” or “I am better off not doing anything than risk it going bad”. In life it is hard to be 100% certain about anything, so when faced with tasks or goals where uncertainty lies (e.g., decision making, health check-ups, confronting a relationship problem), these people will feel very anxious and fearful. They may then use procrastination as a way of alleviating their fear, by putting off any action that could lead to an unknown or catastrophic outcome. In this way their procrastination ensures nothing changes for the mean time, and hence if nothing changes, nothing bad can happen at least for now, so they temporarily feel more certain about things. In addition, **fear of success** mentioned above can also be a fear of uncertainty in disguise (e.g., “if I succeed, then everything will change, and what if it is for the worse”).

**Low Self-Confidence**

Some people don’t think much of themselves generally. They doubt their abilities, and lack confidence that they are capable individuals who can tackle tasks or goals that come their way. These types of people may have rules like “I *can’t* do things because I am incapable” or assumptions like “if I try things, then my inadequacies will show through”. For these types of people, when faced with a task that requires some self-confidence to tackle it (e.g. taking on new work responsibilities, starting a new course or hobby, confronting a family member), these people will have no self-belief that they can do it, and hence will feel depressed and despairing. They may then use procrastination as a way of not having to face that they can’t do something because of their flaws. As such by not trying or by giving up at a task, they avoid having to see their supposed incapability’s and inadequacies, because they never put themselves in challenging situations to truly see what they are made of.

**Depleted Energy**

Some people don’t think they are capable when life becomes tough. That is, under certain circumstances, they don’t believe they have the ability to complete tasks and fulfil goals. Some of these circumstances are: when they are *stressed* because there are a lot of competing demands in their life; when they are physically or mentally *fatigued* in some way; when their *motivation* is low and they don’t have the inspiration to do things; or when they are *depressed* and aren’t in the mood to get things done. These people have rules like “I *can’t* do things when I am stressed/ fatigued/ unmotivated/ depressed” or “I *must* rest when my energy is low” or assumptions like “if I do things when I am stressed/ fatigued/ unmotivated/ depressed, I will make things worse”. For these people, when they are faced with a task at a time when their energy is depleted, they will feel exhausted and possibly despairing and frustrated, because they believe they can’t do it. They may then use procrastination as a way of trying to rebuild energy and get rid of their exhaustion, with the idea that if I rest rather than do, things will somehow get better.

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| page4image10504**Unhelpful Rules & Assumptions (examples)** | |
| **Need To Be In Charge**  ❑I must be in charge at all times  ❑ Things should be done my way  ❑ I shouldn’t have to do things that I don’t want to  ❑ I shouldn’t have to do things because someone else says so  ❑ If I am not 100% in charge of what I do, then I am weak | **Pleasure Seeking**  ❑Life is too short to be doing things that are boring or hard  ❑ Fun should always come first  ❑ Life should be fun at all times  ❑ Pleasure here & now should be all that matters  ❑ If I forgo fun, then I will become a boring lifeless drone |
| page4image22168  **Fear Of Failure Or Disapproval**  ❑I must do things perfectly  ❑ I must not fail  ❑ I can’t have others think poorly of me  ❑ If I try, then I will only fail  ❑ If I put my work out there, then others will think badly of me  page4image26632 | **Fear Of Uncertainty Or Catastrophe**  ❑I must be certain of what will happen  ❑ I should be prepared for the worst  ❑ I can’t stand not knowing the outcome  ❑ If I take action, then something bad will happen  ❑ I am better off not doing anything, than risk it going bad |
| **Low Self-Confidence**  ❑I can’t do things because I am incapable  ❑ I’m too inadequate so I can’t get things done  ❑ If I try things, then my inadequacies will show through  ❑ I shouldn’t try things when I know I’m no good  ❑ If I know I won’t be able to do something, then I shouldn’t bother | **Depleted Energy**  ❑I can’t do things when I am stressed/ fatigued/ unmotivated/ depressed  ❑ I must rest when my energy is low  ❑ I must be energised to be able to do things  ❑ If I do things when I am stressed/ fatigued/ unmotivated/ depressed, I will make things worse  ❑ If I do things when I am not energised, then it won’t work out |