WORKSHEET 67 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Stopping putting things off

Getting started with a 5-minute first step

AIM

Understand procrastination as a way of avoiding immediate emotional discomfort and practise getting started with very small steps.

WHO IT IS FOR

Procrastination, studies, work, paperwork, perfectionism.

DURATION

10 min in session; daily practice

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Identify the task being put off and the emotion it triggers (boredom, fear of failing, confusion).
2. Show the cycle: putting it off brings immediate relief, but the task and the guilt grow.
3. Break the task down into a very concrete 5-minute first step.
4. Start the step with the discomfort and note what happens after 5 minutes.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Procrastination isn’t laziness: avoid judging. If it goes with a general lack of energy, consider low mood.

REFERENCES

Steel, P. (2007). The nature of procrastination: A meta-analytic and theoretical review of quintessential self-regulatory failure. Psychological Bulletin, 133(1), 65-94.

Martell, C. R., Dimidjian, S. & Herman-Dunn, R. (2010). Behavioral Activation for Depression: A Clinician's Guide. Guilford.

PSYCHOLOGIST’S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 67 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

Stopping putting things off

We rarely put things off out of laziness: we put them off to avoid discomfort (boredom, fear of doing it badly, confusion). The hardest part is starting. The secret: a first step so small it is almost laughable.

1. The task I am putting off: _____
2. What I feel when I think about it: _____
3. My very concrete 5-minute first step: _____
4. I do it now, with the discomfort. After 5 minutes I decide whether to carry on.

Task	5-min first step	Done? (yes/no)	What happened next

What helps me most to get started?

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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