



March 1, 2006 – More at Midday

## IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO STOP PROCRASTINATING!

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What are you thinking of putting off until tomorrow? What projects have you started but can't seem to finish? What task on your "To Do" list keeps rolling over from week to week?

Procrastination may be one of your biggest energy drainers. Yet we think it somehow serves a purpose to make life a little more pleasant, by avoiding something we don't want to do. But instead it adds stress, disorganization, failure, and guilt. And the motto of "just do it" may not be the best solution. Other problems that procrastination can cause include: missed deadlines, lost opportunities, tardiness, unnecessary expenses, and even health and medical problems.

By first understanding and recognizing your own reasons for procrastinating, you can then develop strategies to overcome them. Here are six common causes that stem from the habit of procrastination and suggestions for dealing with them:

CAUSE OF PROCRASTINATION	SOLUTION
<b>Too Big:</b> Feeling like a project is too massive and complex to complete	Break task into small pieces; "bite off what you can chew" for today.
<b>Indecision:</b> You can't make up your mind about what to do	Identify what other information you need or what will help you make a decision.
<b>Lack of Interest:</b> The task seems boring and tiring, or perhaps was assigned to you	Take it on at your peak to maximize your energy.
<b>Distraction, disorganization</b> or poor Time Management	Clear your environment. Block out a specific amount of time. List by importance or due date or smallest to largest task.
<b>Fear of Failure:</b> Lack of self confidence, or inability to handle the task	Focus on your strengths and the end result. Remind yourself of how good the completion will feel.
<b>Perfectionism:</b> Delaying because you want things to be perfect	Relax your expectations of how you feel things "should" be. Set a deadline.

One of the many benefits of overcoming your avoidance habits includes a sense of energy and enthusiasm that completing the task will trigger. There is a release of endorphins in the brain, causing the experience of a natural high. And we know how "checking off" an item on our "To Do" list feels. However, chronic procrastination may be a symptom of a serious underlying problem, such as



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depression, addiction, or an attention disorder. These individuals frequently do not understand why they cannot seem to “get it together,” and can become resigned to a life of struggle, frustration, and underachievement. Seeking professional help and support can help individuals focus on the real problems in order to overcome the procrastination behavior.

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### **About Centerstone**

Centerstone ([www.centerstone.org](http://www.centerstone.org)), celebrating 50 years of service in 2006, is the largest behavioral healthcare provider in Tennessee and the ninth largest in the nation. A not-for-profit organization, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to individuals of all ages and their families. Centerstone is devoted to research that seeks to identify, treat and eliminate mental illness. Each year, the organization provides services to more than 45,000 individuals. The Centerstone network includes more than 60 facilities throughout the middle Tennessee region.

For more information about Centerstone, please call (615) 460-4357 or toll free at (888) 291-4357.

### **About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS**

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone’s wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone’s Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, “Homicide Response.” Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.