Throughout this course I have been challenged to analyze how I learn, think, and study. I have learned a lot about myself as well as many new strategies on how to improve myself. One area of learning that I find particularly challenging for me is procrastination and time management. Throughout college I have struggled with procrastination. Dembo and Seli define procrastination as the “postponement of tasks” (2008, p.163). I have a tendency to wait until the last minute to do my work; I do this because I know that I will still get it done. However, sometimes it causes me to rush and then I do not produce my best work. Also, since I play softball here at Georgia State I need to be better at getting my work done in advance because with practices and games, my time is limited to complete assignments. If I improve my time management skills then my tendency to procrastinate will decrease. After reading the textbook, and doing research I have found different strategies and solutions to help me with procrastination and time management. These solutions include creating a work area for myself free of distractions, reinforcement, use a planning tool, and break the task into smaller portions.

The University of Oregon Counseling and Testing Center suggests to “create a work area for yourself free of distractions (phone, roommates, TV) and commit to staying there for a one to two hour period” (2016). To implement this into my study habits over the past three weeks I tried going to the library and reserving a study room. In the study room I did not have roommates or TV to distract me and I kept my phone in my book bag. An advantage of this study strategy is that there are no distractions, getting your own study room allows you to be in a quiet room by yourself. A disadvantage to me is the time frame they put on the strategy. I personally like to take breaks while I study so sitting down for one to two hours at a time was difficult for me, I began to distract myself by doodling or daydreaming. This strategy showed me how distractions can prevent me from completing my work. If I were to recommend this strategy I would suggest to take a couple of study breaks while doing so, you could take a short walk in the library or get a snack. This will help you refocus when your mind starts to wonder.

A second strategy that I practiced over the past three weeks was a reinforcement strategy. Dembo and Seli referenced Ellis and Knaus, and Ferrari’s reinforcement strategy. The strategy is “Make an agreement with yourself that after a period of working on a task you will reinforce yourself” (Dembo & Seli, 2008, p. 165). A specific time that I implemented this strategy is when I was completing my LT 2010 assignments for the week of March 27th. I could not find any motivation to get started but was really craving some chocolate. I told myself if I sat down and worked on my assignments for 30 minutes then I could have half of a Reese’s egg left over from Easter. After that, I told myself that when I finish the assignment I could go back and have the other half. The entire assignment took me about fifty minutes. I think this method really helped me get my assignments done. It gave me motivation to complete my work and gave me a short time frame to keep me on track and gave me a quick study break. Normally these assignments do not take me a long time, it is the getting started part that takes me a while. This strategy allowed me to get started faster because I was working for my reinforcement. I think this was the advantage of the strategy. A disadvantage of this strategy is that you may not be able to find something that is worth being used as a reinforcement for every assignment that you have. However, I always find that a little bite of something sweet motivates me. This strategy showed me sometimes my problem is getting started, but if I give myself a little reinforcement, once I get started I can finish my work. I recommend if you use this strategy to know your time limits, if you know that you can sit down for two hours and complete work then set a two-hour goal but if you have a hard time concentrating then set your goal for thirty minutes and then provide yourself with the reinforcement.

Sue W. Chapman and Michael Rupured from the University of Georgia suggest using a planning tool to improve your time management skills. Some of their suggestions are: “always record information on the tool itself, review your planning tool daily, and keep a list of your priorities in your planning tool” (Chapman & Rupured, 2008, p. 3). I personally like to write notes down instead of keeping them on my phone or electronically. I have a weekly planner that I never really write in. However, for the past three weeks I have made sure that I use it every day. I have found that it keeps me less stressed and helps me manage everything I have to do. I make lists every night for the assignments I want to get done the following day. Writing a list holds me accountable for getting my work done. I learned that I really enjoy being able to check off all of the work I have completed it makes me feel accomplished. I even find myself making everyday to-do lists for tasks such as washing my clothes, doing the dishes, etc. An advantage of this strategy is that it allows you to see everything that you need to get done and allows you to plan your day accordingly. A disadvantage that I noticed was that sometimes I want to put too much on my lists however, I just rolled the assignments over to the next day if I did not get to them. I recommend that everyone find the planner that works best for him or her. I know that I personally like pen and paper over anything electronic but once you find the planner that works for you it is a lifesaver!

A final strategy that I found to help with my procrastination and time management struggle is to break the task down into smaller pieces. Carroll College suggests, “writing down all the steps involved in your project and see each step as a manageable job that can get done with little effort. Even if we dislike some duties, we can handle them if they last only for a short time” (Carroll College Counseling Services). Over the course of the three weeks I have used this method with the reinforcement method. I had a six to eight page paper to write for one of my classes and had no idea where to start. When I sat down I decided to break the paper into smaller pieces. I wrote down in my weekly planner what I wanted to get done each day. I started with brainstorming, then a rough draft, peer edit, and a final draft. I gave myself more days for tasks that I thought would take longer. While I was completing each day I told also implementing the reinforcement strategy, I told myself after an hour of working I would allow myself ten minutes on the computer. This strategy taught me if you break up big assignments they are easier to complete and do not overwhelm you. I thought this was a huge advantage to this strategy. I conquered an eight page paper with no problem because I split it up into smaller, more manageable tasks. I did not find a disadvantage to this strategy but for some people it maybe that you have to start enough time ahead of the due date in order for you to have time to break up the task. I would recommend using a daily planner to keep yourself on track with completing the assignment.

Over the past three weeks I have witnessed a significant decrease in my procrastination and improvement in my time management skills. I now use my planner daily and also for tasks that do not involve schoolwork. The planner makes me feel organized and accomplished, while it also holds me accountable for getting my work done. I find myself breaking up all of my daily tasks and using reinforcement to motivate myself. For example, when I was cleaning my room I told myself if I worked nonstop for thirty minutes then I could go have dinner with my friends that night. I think all of these strategies proved to be beneficial to me and I plan to continue to use them in the future.

Notes for strategies: **For a distraction free environment** I went to the library during the first week and booked a study room. It was very quiet and I could notice a difference in the amount of time it took me to get my work done. However, after a while I noticed that I began to distract myself when I sat down for too long. The next week I tried studying in my room but my bed was a distraction even though my roommate was not there, and I turned my phone off. The third week I tried studying at the kitchen table, which I think, was the best option for me especially when I broke up the time I was sitting.

**Reinforcement:** I rewarded myself with computer time and food over the past three weeks. I found that food motivated me more than browsing the Internet. By telling myself that if I started my work and worked on it for a certain amount of time then I could eat something really motivated me to start my work.

**Planning tool:** I dedicated the past three weeks to writing everything down in my daily planner. I would make lists and it was like a competition with myself to complete everything on the list. I now do this regularly and see how big of a difference it makes.

**Break the task down:** I think this strategy works well with the reinforcement strategy. If I completed one part of the assignment then I would reward myself. I did this for my LT class when there was more than one assignment due for the week. I also did this with my eight page paper that I had to write; it makes the task seem not as overwhelming.

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