

THE THINK TANK

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A Note From the Editor

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Well, we're half way through the semester and free time is getting hard to come by. Exams, reading, papers, and group projects all compete for our time. We react by feeling anxious and wondering how we'll get everything done. Many of us procrastinate, making the problem even worse.

This issue of the *Think Tank* offers advice on how to make the most of the time you have each day. In the articles that follow, your fellow students and professional staff from the Academic Center for Excellence and Writing Center try to help you get everything done on time by using lists, planners, calendars and anything else they've found that works. v



Managing Your Time Wisely = Being Successful in Life *by Antonella Servant, Writing Specialist*

As a teacher and student, I have learned that managing one's time wisely means much more than owning a daily planner or writing "to do" lists each day. Time management is an art that must be learned, and I believe there are some guidelines students can follow, not only to efficiently manage their time, but to be successful in life.

- I. Be **RESPONSIBLE**: Everyone has deadlines and due dates. A large part of our lives revolves around being on time, whether to a movie we are going to see, a project we are doing for class, or a bill we have to pay. As a student at Bryant College, your **NUMBER ONE RESPONSIBILITY** is your classes.

- II. Be **ORGANIZED**: It is extremely important to prioritize your assignments. Organize your tasks, and plan the time to work on them.
- III. Be **EFFICIENT**: Make the best use of your time. If you have two hours on Tuesday to work on a paper, don't work in a place where you will be distracted. Find a quiet place where you will be motivated to work for the entire time you've allotted.
- IV. Be **REALISTIC**: If your five-page paper is due on Friday, don't cram your week with extra-curricular activities or social engagements. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do in the amount of time that you have.

Adhering to these guidelines takes time and patience, but the rewards are endless! v

The Life of a Daily Planner

by Melissa Kendall, Writing Consultant

My journey began on July 30, 2001, when a Bryant College student purchased me for five dollars at the Follet Bookstore. Personally, I believe that my value should be a lot higher, maybe sixty dollars (five dollars per month). Yeah, I definitely think sixty dollars would cover the amount of work I do for my owner. If you think about how important I am, five dollars a month is a small price to pay. After all, I'll help you to be successful all year. However, my importance is never fully appreciated at the begin-

ning of my journey.

My life...hmmm, where do I begin? I am carried everywhere my student-owner goes; places like micro-economics class, the MAC, and South dining hall. My student brings me along to record her upcoming event(s) or assignment(s). By the first week of my life, I am filled with homework assignments from five different classes, sometimes color coded by a highlighter to indicate the importance of a particular assignment. I am also filled with field hockey practice times, the meeting times for the Marketing Organization, and the hours my owner will be working in the library.

As the weeks pass along, my pages are quickly filled up with up-coming mid-terms, papers that are due, upcoming holidays (and accompanying smiley faces), and many more activities that my owner will be participating in. This lifestyle carries on for weeks, which turns into months, and then, before either of us realizes it, I'm nearly full of past accomplishments. It's been a year that we've been together.

At the end of our year together, sometime in early August, it is time for my owner to put me in a drawer and purchase a new planner. I am happy that, before I was discarded, this one particular Bryant College student was able to look back at the many weeks we spent together, planning and organizing her life, and say a sincere thank you: thank you for the success that she has achieved over the past year by planning out each day, which quickly became weeks, which too soon became a year. I, a little daily planner, was able to help her realize a

year of achievement. What more could I ask for? v

Procrastination: Time Management's Enemy

by Laurie Hazard, Ed.D.

Many students spend an inordinate amount of time constructing elaborate schedules, making "to do" lists, and recording assignments in their planners. All of these exercises and practices are a necessary part of setting and meeting semester goals. Utilizing these time management practices and setting academic goals make students feel good; they've accomplished something. At the very least, they've organized themselves. Unfortunately, some students who manage to get this far with time management practices and goal setting fail to follow through on the master plan they've set up for themselves. Procrastination behaviors and maladaptive attitudes get in their way.

There are three major components to procrastination: fearing failure, engaging in replacement activities, and lying. In many instances, students will procrastinate because of self-doubt. They "catastrophize" by feeding themselves negative thoughts, such as, "Why should I bother to attempt my math homework? I've never been good in math and no matter how hard I try, I know I'll still fail."

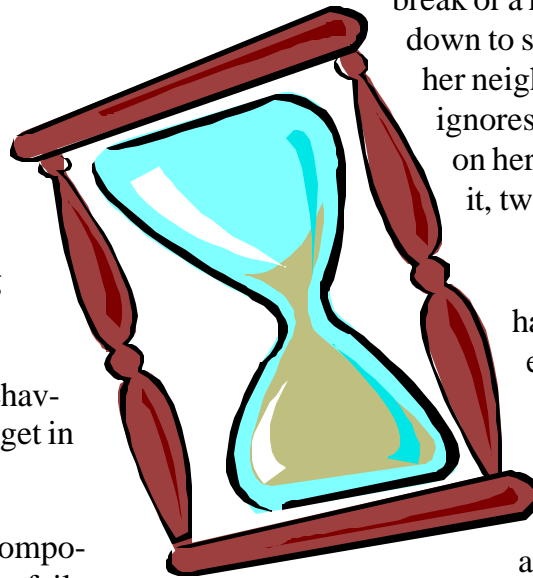
Such negative thoughts lead procrastinators to avoid subjects they fear or dislike and find replacement activities. Replacement activities include watching TV or playing video games, spending too much time on the telephone or hanging out with friends. These

replacement activities are easy to recognize because they are not productive. Other replacement activities, however, are masked by productivity and not as easy to identify. Cleaning, for example, is a productive replacement activity.

Consider this scenario: Mary goes to her room in between classes. She tells herself that she can't possibly study in her room until it's spotless. As a result, she cleans her room from top to bottom and is proud of what she's accomplished. She's worked so hard on her cleaning she tells herself that she deserves a break or a reward before she gets down to studying. She flits off to her neighbor's room for a visit and ignores the business text sitting on her desk. Before she realizes it, two hours have gone by.

Or this scenario: John has a paper due in his Liberal Arts Freshman Seminar course the following day. He hasn't even started it. John loves his math course, so although he's completed his

homework in that class, he continues to do practice problems and is proud of how many he gets right. His roommate is struggling in math and John helps him; his roommate begins to understand the material, which makes John feel good. John tells himself that it's ok that he hasn't started his paper, "Even though it's 10 PM, I still have plenty of time; the paper isn't due until tomorrow afternoon. My professor seems like a nice person. Maybe I'll tell her my disk got corrupted and I have to retype the whole thing. She'll buy that and it will buy me more time. At least I'm doing well in math, and I even helped my roommate."



In both scenarios the students convince themselves that because they are being productive, it's ok to avoid priorities. This is where the lying component of procrastination emerges. When students procrastinate, they put themselves in the position of lying to themselves or to others. Ultimately, procrastination is a form of lying. Mary told herself that cleaning was more important than math, thus she should clean first. John cornered himself into the position of spinning a lie to feed his professor.

Replacement activities that are masked by productivity are very difficult to recognize. Students must keep their priorities in the forefront of their minds. Above all, students must learn to tune out the negative thoughts that keep them from tackling their work. At one time or another, we all have that negative tape recorder playing in our minds. Successful people tune out negative thoughts and persevere in the face of failure. As Michael Jordan said, "I've missed more than nine thousand shots in my career. I've lost almost three hundred games. Twenty six times I was trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over in my life and that is why I succeed." √

Battling Procrastination and Winning!

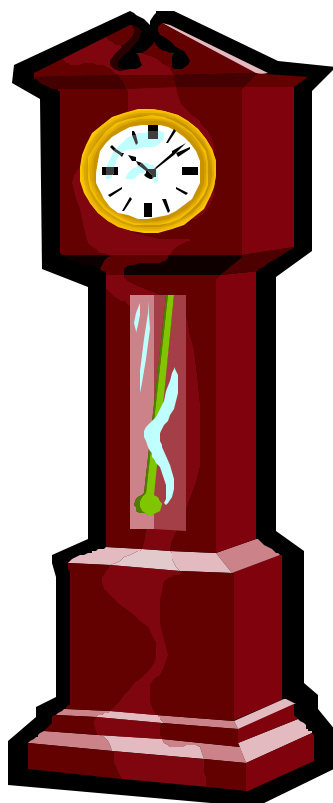
by Jennifer Hanson, Learning Specialist

"I'll set my alarm and get up early to finish studying before my 9:00 a.m. history class."

"Just one more video game, then I'll get to my economics homework."

"I'll start that paper as soon as fill in your favorite television show is over."

Sound familiar? Procrastination is one of your GPA's biggest enemies. In order to succeed in college you need to produce quality work on time. Learning to manage your time wisely will help you to combat the habit of procrastination. Here are some tips you may find useful:



1. Figure out what you are avoiding the most, and do that first.

2. Set daily goals for yourself.

Prioritize, prioritize, prioritize. You are in college. Is your goal really to e-mail all of your friends tonight or be prepared for class tomorrow? If you prioritize and get the assignments completed, e-mail away!

3. Break down a large project into smaller pieces and just do it.

Don't know where to start? Give yourself deadlines for each section of the project and work on one piece at a time.

4. Reward yourself.

Your favorite dessert, extra time with friends or a phone call home are all great rewards for following your planned, weekly schedule.

5. When you need help – ask.

Be sure to read all directions before beginning an assignment. If you don't understand what the instructor is looking for, ask! If you need additional assistance from a Tutor or a

Learning Specialist, call x6746 or visit Hall 6, 3rd floor. Need help from a Writing Consultant or Writing Specialist? Call x6567 or visit the 4th floor of Hall 6. v

Getting the Most Out of the Writing Center: It's All About Planning

by Jean-Paul Nadeau, Ph.D.

The Writing Center can help you make writing assignments more manageable. Upon receipt of such an assignment, students may be tempted to put off getting started, as they believe they “work well under pressure.” And sometimes they are right. But other times...

You will learn more about yourself as a writer if you leave yourself time to reflect upon what you are writing. You'll get more out of each writing assignment if your writing process includes getting feedback from someone on the Writing Center staff.

Writing always involves a process, involving activities such as identifying the guidelines and demands of a written assignment, gathering ideas in response to those demands, organizing ideas, writing a piece of--or entire version of--the paper, reading over that piece or version, and so on until an acceptable version is created. The “process” of many struggling writers is to sit down at a blank computer screen the day before a paper is due to produce a final draft.

Writers are most successful when they recognize that 1) the writing process takes time, as it is often more cyclical than linear and 2) starting early means that they can take more time with each activity.

Writing well often involves going backward to move forward. In other words, you may decide that you need to generate additional evidence, an extended explanation, or an additional point after you have written a rough draft. Alternatively, you may decide that the argument you've constructed lacks a logical structure, so you make an outline from your draft and rework your organizational strategy. Just because you've got a version of your paper doesn't mean you can't continue to brainstorm, outline, and scribble.

When I suggest that you start papers early, I mean that you should start to think seriously about the assignment the day you receive formal instructions from your professor. Faculty don't haphazardly assign writing in their courses; your management professor has reasons for giving you the low-down on your team project two months in advance. One reason, of course, is that s/he thinks it should take a student that long to produce a successful paper.

Once you receive your instructions, try breaking the paper or project down into a series of deadlines in your daily planner. Force yourself, for example, to have an informal outline in a week and a rough draft in two weeks.

If you do so, you'll find that you have plenty of time to visit the Writing Center and have time to make necessary changes once you've received feedback. Too often students find themselves disappointed and frustrated because they realize too late that they haven't answered the question their professor asked...and their paper is due in two hours. Take my advice, and you'll reduce your chances of being in this rather hopeless situation. v

