Ending Procrastination

Be Aware. Exploring these questions may provide the answers to overcoming procrastination:

Why are you procrastinating?
Are you sure you understand the project at hand?
What can you do to acquire the necessary knowledge or understanding to complete the project?
What things about your physical space may cause you to be distracted?
What will happen once the task is complete?
What are your own expectations about the finished task?
Are you anxious about the finished product because it will be judged? Why?

Take Control. You have more control of the situation than you realize:

Own the Clock. Know the deadline and give yourself a little room to spare. If the deadline is 3pm on Friday, set a new deadline of 10am on Friday. This will put you in control of your time and provide a little cushion to manage surprises. If you feel you do your best work under stress, moving up the deadline should give you a little more motivation to perform (just be sure you are doing quality work and not rushing to be rushing). View deadlines as an opportunity to impress and even amaze!

Minimize Distractions. Cell phones, TV, music, web surfing, roommates, family, and even other tasks can become an obstacle when trying to complete a task. Remove the distraction or relocate yourself to an area where these distractions are reduced.

Break it down. Tasks involve a variety of activities and interactions. Breaking the task into manageable steps or goals will make the largest of tasks achievable. Assign each step a realistic time frame to complete. Writing the steps on a list or calendar will give you a visual reminder of what needs to be done. Crossing things off items on your list or calendar can provide a real sense of satisfaction and progress.

Gather Yourself. Before you begin, prepare your workspace with the items you will need. Books, laptop, iPad, dictionary, syllabi, charts, graphs, etc. all critical to completing the task should be within arms-reach. This will help you to stay focused and better manage your time. Sequester yourself in the room until you have reached a self-determined goal – do NOT leave the room until you have reached that goal!

Break it down, again. Work in concentrated, “bursts” of time. Set a timer for 20 minutes and power through until the time is up. Take a quick, two-to-three minute break and set the timer again for another 20-minute round.

Reward Yourself. Whether you’ve finished a step, reached a goal, or completed the task entirely, reward yourself with a break, a walk, check on the kids, get a coffee, phone a friend, listen to some music, exercise, read a fun book…

Stay Positive. There is always something to learn from setbacks. You are NOT lazy. Remember: you are in control. So change your approach, do it differently next time, and continue your momentum to completion.