

## Handout 5.1: Common Myths About Procrastination

### ***Myth 1: People who procrastinate are just plain lazy.***

Calling someone “lazy” is an example of the cognitive error of labeling. However, when people feel stuck and are inactive, they often think of themselves as lazy, which makes them even more self-deprecatory and causes them to be more stuck. In reality, procrastination is a sign of deep-seated issues such as fear of failure, perfectionism, depression, and lack of clarification of goals and values.

### ***Myth 2: For constructive action, it’s best to wait to “get in the mood.”***

We go to work or school even if we don’t feel like it. Waiting for being in the mood is like waiting for the weather to change—sometimes it takes a long time. We can act constructively even if we feel depressed and anxious, and if we wait to feel better, we are dependent on things largely outside our control. Actually, once people take action, they often feel better—so action often comes before an elevated mood.

### ***Myth 3: It’s best to just “get the job done” rather than do it over a period of time.***

Studies have shown that taking a big task and breaking it into small pieces will actually increase the chances of getting it done. People who wait to have the chunk of time they need to do a job and “bite the bullet” might never actually get the chunk of time they want. Chipping away in smaller blocks of time will generally get the job done. (How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!)

### ***Myth 4: Rewarding yourself for taking action is a form of bribery.***

Actually, reinforcement helps us change. Bribes have a negative connotation, and there is nothing negative about using the principles of reinforcement. Many studies have documented the motivation that reinforcement provides as we work toward our goals.