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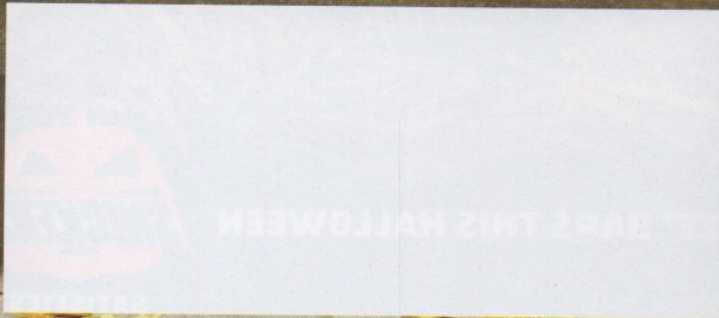
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“I’ll do it later.”

BY LESLIE JOSEL

How to deal with procrastination pushback

Of all the concerns

I hear from parents, procrastination tops the list—and not surprisingly. Research tells me that 87% of high school and college students put stuff off in one way or another. Generally, when it comes to getting things done, I believe in allowing teens to set the schedule and pace that seem to work best for them. But admittedly this can backfire.

For some, getting started is overwhelming, especially if the assignment feels too big or vague. With others, it’s the lack of a true time sense, of knowing how long it really takes to get

So, for example, don’t just tell your kids to clean up the yard, then wait to see what (if anything) they do. Instead, create a specific list of smaller tasks, such as: 1. Empty contents of flower pots into trash bags. 2. Bring bags to side of house. 3. Place empty pots and all gardening tools in garage. And so on. This makes it much easier for teens to wrap their brain around what needs to happen.

• Assign due dates.

For any multi-step tasks with a stated deadline, such as school projects, help teens assign firm

Dividing any big assignment into a series of small, doable tasks and using a timer are two smart ways to beat back the ugly beast called procrastination.

something done. (As in, banging out an entire paper in two hours is not realistic.) Then there are those who just can’t ignite without a deadline looming.

No matter which category your kids fall into, there are ways you can help—and stay sane.

• Set clear expectations.

Whether it’s working on a science project or cleaning up the yard, kids will perform better if they know precisely what has to be done and when.

• Divide any large project into a series of small tasks.

I can’t stress this enough. Breaking a big job down into manageable steps makes it a lot less daunting and provides multiple opportunities to spark much-needed momentum.

due dates to each individual step. Schedule these as regular assignments so your kids will know to work on them. This is critical. Most students will know to take care of work that’s due the next day. Making a time line for long-term assignments and projects can be more challenging, but it’s critical for learning successful time management skills.

• Use a timer.

This tip is simple but powerful. Setting a predetermined amount of time to work can help teens stay on task during that period. If they only have an hour, they’re more likely to

get in gear and stay there. Have them use a device that actually shows time running down for a visual cue to spur them along.

• Start small.

When it comes to homework, suggest a “one to start” approach. As in, one math problem, one page to read, one paragraph to write. Get the idea? Chances are that once your kids get the ball rolling, they’ll see their way clear to do another math problem, read another page or write another paragraph. The dread that drives procrastination is almost always exaggerated. Once they realize it’s not that bad, teens will usually keep going.

• Offer incentives.

I’m a big fan of rewarding positive behavior versus punishing negative. Decide what specific action you want to encourage, such as starting homework by a certain time each night. Then ask your kids what payola they’d like to work toward. Their input is essential for this to be effective.

• Choose to forgive.

We get super mad at our kids when they procrastinate, but anger and negativity only make the problem worse. So instead of getting on their case, offer absolution. Trust me, you will both be better off for it.

For more parenting advice, check out Leslie’s previous articles at familycircle.com/josel.

