

Procrastination May Be Conducive To Creativity, According To Science

Sometimes waiting is exactly what you need to do.



BY NICOLAS COLE - Contributor, Inc.com@Nicolascole77

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to do something less productive."

He pulls this theory from a creative doctoral student, named Jihae Shin, that approached him with the idea that procrastination might actually be conducive to originality. "Shin proposed that when you put off a task, you buy yourself time to engage in divergent thinking rather than foreclosing on one particular idea. As a result, you consider a wider range of original concepts and ultimately choose a more novel direction."

Grant's primary example in this section of his book is Leonardo da Vinci. Leonardo had his hands in everything: painting and sculpting, architecture and music, math and engineering, geology and cartography, and anatomy and botany. But Grant notes the following--a unique detail about one of Leonardo's greatest pieces of work: "Scholars estimate that da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa on and off for a few years starting in 1503, left it unfinished, and didn't complete it until close to his death in 1519. His critics believed he was wasting his time dabbling with optical experiments and other distractions that kept him from completing his paintings. These distractions, though, turned out to be vital to his originality."

Grant's further examples in this section highlight the important of giving the subconscious ample time to digest a creative problem, as well as giving the artist time to acquire new, useful skills, in order to better tackle the obstacle ahead.

The next time you are feeling bad about procrastinating, ask yourself if you are secretly trying to give yourself more time and space to find a better solution. There is a difference between procrastination out of laziness, and, as referenced above, "intentional procrastination." Having the awareness to decide which one you are acting from, however, is a completely different story.

[I write quite a bit about procrastination and the importance of "getting stuff done."](#) But as someone who knows the infinite timetable that seems to accompany every "creative" endeavor, I read something recently that helped re-frame the way I see the topic of procrastination. In [Adam Grant's](#) wildfire read, *Originals*, he explains that, "When you procrastinate, you're intentionally delaying work that needs to be done. You might be thinking about the task, but you postpone making real progress on it or finishing it