

# Procrastination & Flow Experience

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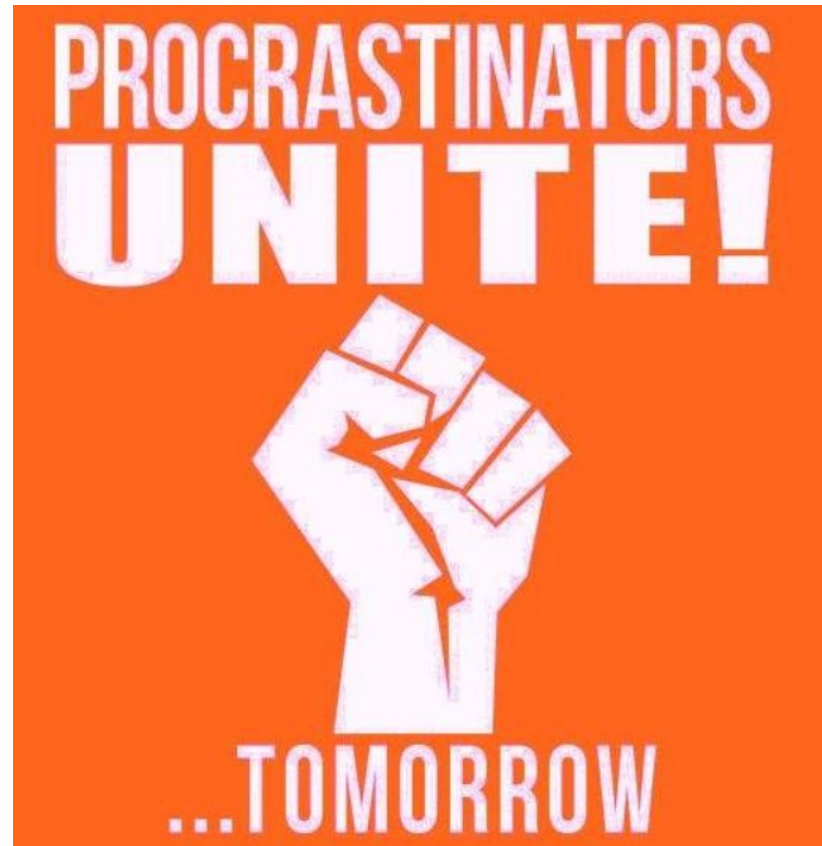
PV236 – TIME MANAGEMENT & EFFECTIVENESS

JOSEF SPURNÝ



# Procrastination

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# What is procrastination?

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- avoiding doing things
- postponing duties
- doing “substitute” activities
  - Not fulfilling duties, neither relaxing
- task swapping

# How to become the best procrastinator?

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# How to become the best procrastinator?

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- You need to set up your:
  - web browser
  - smartphone
  - room & desk
  - time of day
  - roommates
  - ...

# Do you procrastinate globally or locally?

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- Everyone procrastinates, from time to time
- Do I have a problem?
  - Ongoing, recurrent procrastination
  - Procrastinating enjoyable activities
  - Consistent struggle to deliver school/work tasks in time
  - Subjective feeling that something is wrong, but I can't help myself

# Two aspects of procrastination

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## ■ Emotional

- I must do things that I do not like
  - *Do I even know what I enjoy?*
- Fear of failure / criticism

## ■ Cognitive

- I must do vaguely defined tasks
- I am not sure how to solve it
- Choice paralysis
  - at the end of the day, it still might be an emotional problem
    - uncertainty, lack of self-confidence
    - = impaired ability to make decisions

# Know yourself to ride the procrastination horse

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- It's in your personality
  - Self-awareness
  - Self-development (vs personal development)
  - Therapy / Coaching (aka “guided introspection”)
  - Seek meaning
- Do you need stress to get to “your” performance level?
  - Concept of “psychological hardiness”



# Time management paradoxes

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- Using TM tools and techniques to advocate procrastination
- Applied TM leads to increased pressure instead of reducing it
- Investing more willpower to self-motivate instead of changing “the system”
  - Forming habits
  - Removing distractions

# Caution: teacher's subjective opinion!

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In the long term, you cannot “solve” procrastination just by pushing yourself to do things you do not want to do (by using tools/techniques)

- This way you are only getting more efficient at discharging your battery
  - *Burnout syndrome*
  - *Psychosomatic symptoms / diseases*
  - *Stress, aggression, easy irritation*
- These techniques should be combined with maintenance of narcissistic equilibrium, and self-awareness

# Anti-procrastination tips & techniques

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- **5-minute Wonder**

- Choose a task that can be done within 5 minutes
- Set your timer
- Once you start working, you are much likely to go on
- Unfinished tasks are likely to be stuck in your memory

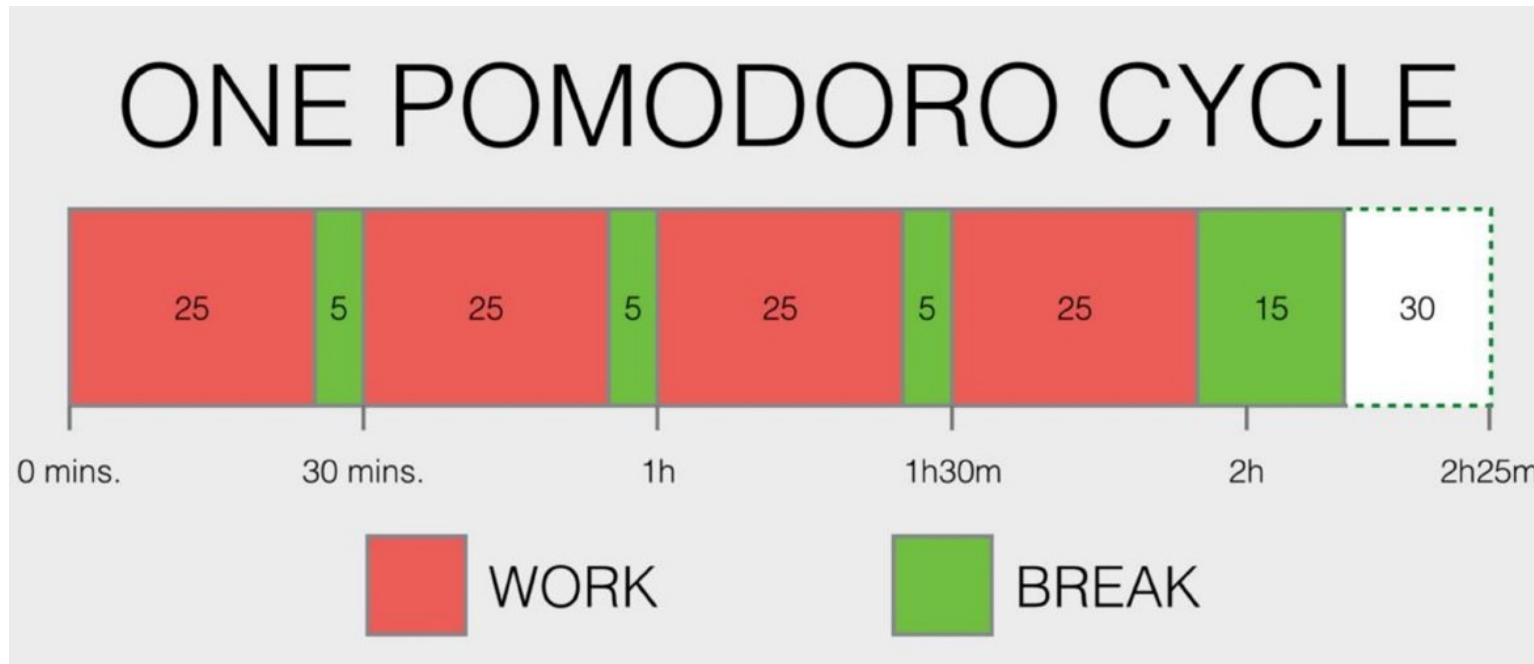


# Anti-procrastination tips & techniques

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- **Pomodoro**

- 25 minutes of focused work followed by 5 minutes brake

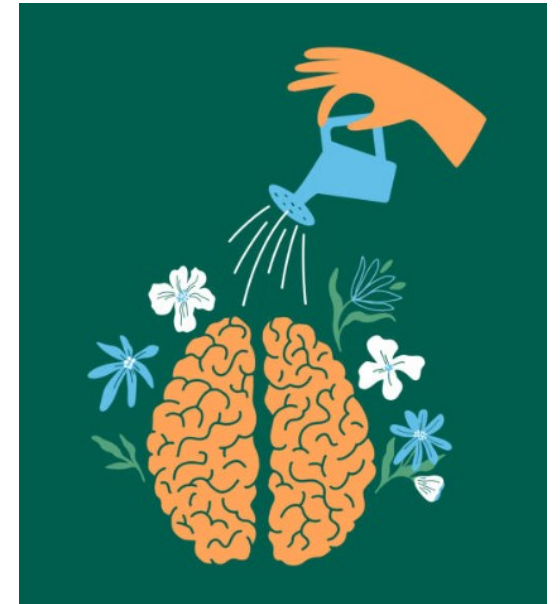


# Anti-procrastination tips & techniques

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- **Forgive yourself**

- The more you can forgive yourself for past procrastination, the more you are likely to stop procrastinating
- break the downward spiral, forgive yourself
- practice mindfulness – meditation, self-appreciation



# Anti-procrastination tips & techniques

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## ■ Power Song

- pick a song that is energizing and positive
- play (and sing) that song when you achieve something or when you feel good
- that song will be associated in your brain with positive emotions
- play (and sing) that song when you want start doing something



# Anti-procrastination tips & techniques

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- **Reduce decision making**

- making decision requires attention and energy
- when feeling good, make plans for upcoming day(s) to avoid decision making later (and multiple times)
  - One big thing – plan for one demanding task TBD next day
  - No-matter-whats – at least 30min activity that you enjoy
- form up routines (e.g., gym every Wed 6PM) or habits (separate lecture)

# Anti-procrastination tips & techniques

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- **All or nothing**

- tip by novel writer Raymond Chandler
- when facing a task, dedicate a timeslot (e.g. 90 minutes)
- during this time, you may work on that task (or you don't – you don't have to)
- but you should not do anything else!
  - Turn-off phone, wifi, doors, windows...whatever
- you are likely to at least start thinking about the task, which is a first step to success
- don't feel bad when you haven't written anything – this just wasn't your day



# Anti-procrastination tips & techniques

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What else works for you?

# The Flow experience

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# The Flow experience

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- Theoretical concept introduced by Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
- A state of high productivity and effortless motivation
- No external reward is necessarily present
- Positively correlates with motivation level
  - Enjoyable activity together with concentration may lead to flow experience more often

# How the Flow looks like?

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1. Action-awareness merging
  - Involvement in action is automatic and natural
  - You become what you do
2. Full concentration
  - Immersion, full engagement in the activity
  - Ability to divert distractions
3. Sense of control
  - Rather than consciously trying to remain “in control”, flow experience is about feeling of control without willpower involvement
4. Loss of Ego
  - Normally, we monitor and regulate our behavior to be acceptable by others
  - In the flow, people are involved in the activity to such extent that self-monitoring is suppressed
5. Time distortion
  - Subjective feeling of losing track of time
  - Time can be slowed, accelerated or may become irrelevant

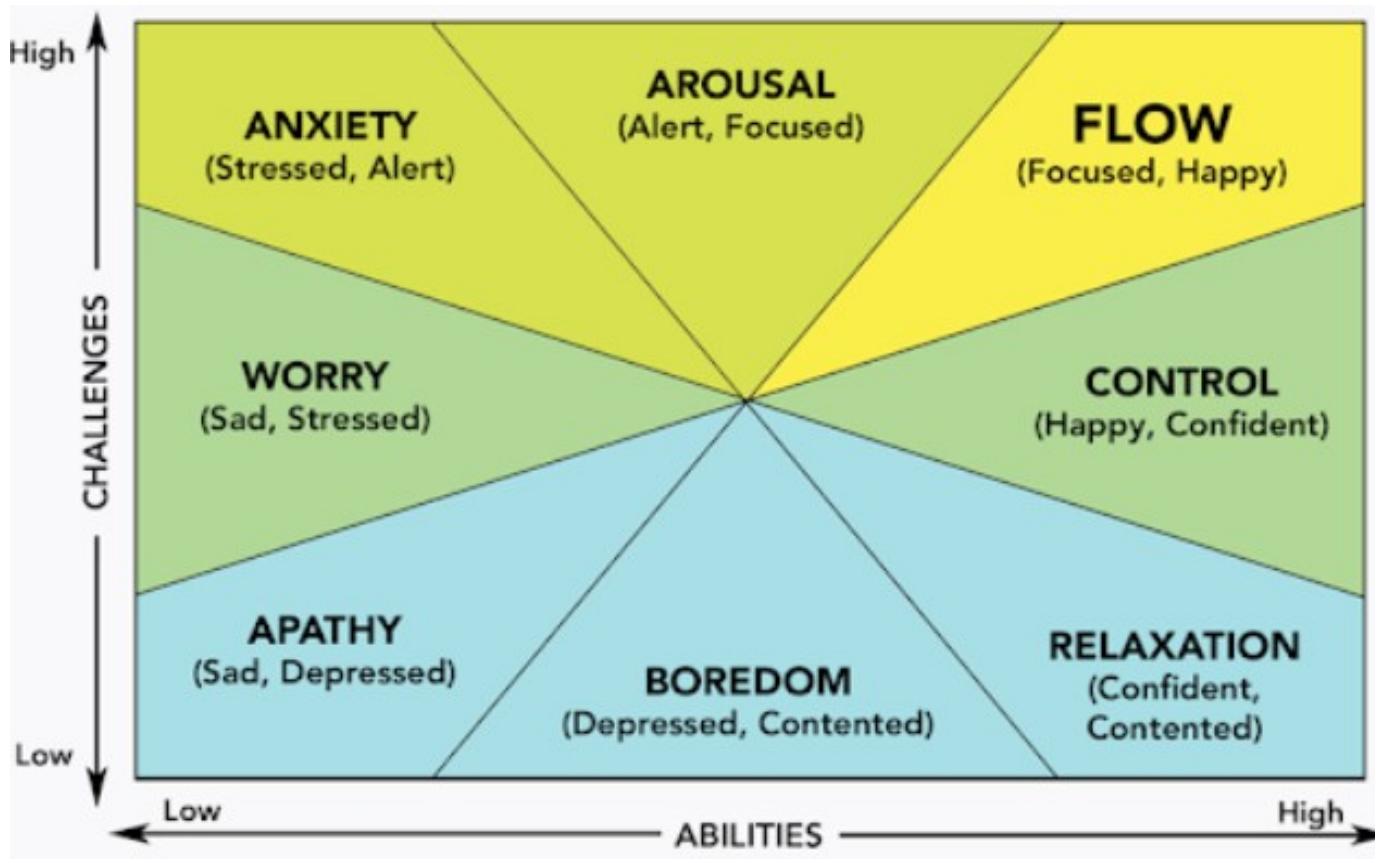
# How to enter the Flow?

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- Do you experience flow?
- In what situations? Can you repeat it?

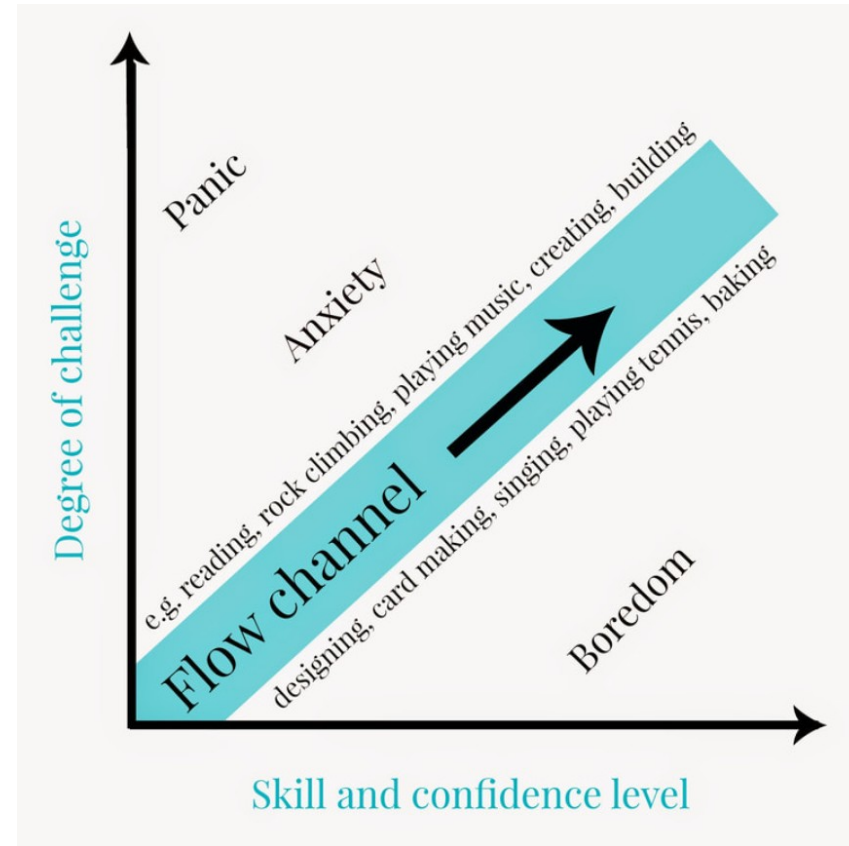
# The Flow model

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# The Flow channel

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# The Flow preconditions by Csikszentmihalyi

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1. Challenge-skill balance
  - Task is not too hard, nor too easy
  - “Zone of proximal development”
2. Well-defined task, consistent feedback
  - Both the goal and the path leading to it are clear



# Exercises/Tips:

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- Evaluate your skill level and set appropriate, clearly-defined goals (write them down)
- Adjust your daily routine & environment
- Create own mission statement – what do you want to achieve?
- Focus on internal validation of success instead of external

# Homework assignment

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1. What are the typical situations that trigger your procrastination?
2. What do you do when you procrastinate? What would you like to do instead?
3. Try out some of the procrastination tips mentioned in this presentation (or any other you will search for) and write a short reflection whether it worked (or not) for you.