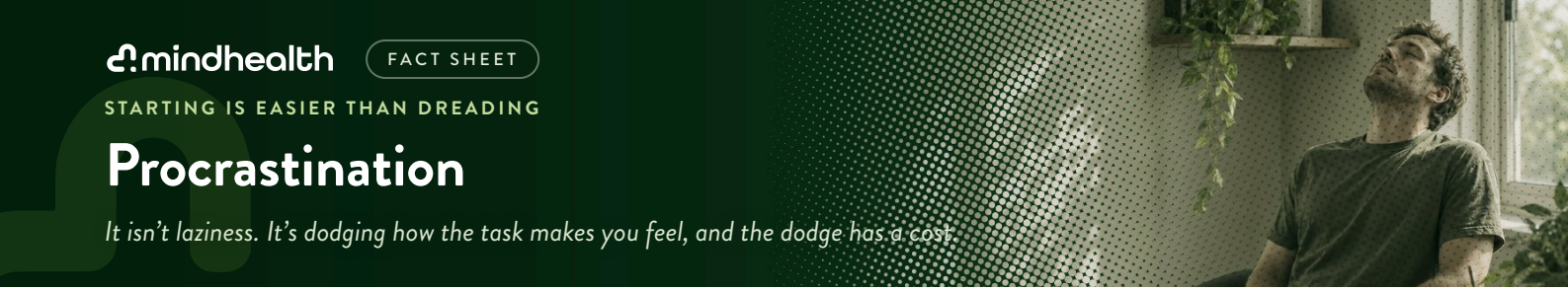
mindhealth FACT SHEET

STARTING IS EASIER THAN DREADING

Procrastination

It isn't laziness. It's dodging how the task makes you feel, and the dodge has a cost.



Not laziness
Avoiding how the task feels

The 5-minute door
Starting shrinks it

Momentum
Action arrives before readiness

01 Why we put things off

Procrastination is emotion management, not time management. The task carries a feeling (boredom, confusion, fear of doing it badly) and putting it off deletes that feeling instantly. The relief is real, which is exactly why the habit sticks. Meanwhile the task casts a shadow far bigger than itself: the longer it waits, the scarier it looks.

02 Starting shrinks the shadow

Almost everything feels bigger unstarted. The way in isn't motivation but contact: touch the task for five minutes and the monster usually turns out to be a lizard. Make the first step so small it's hard to refuse. And when you slip, skip the self-attack, because people who forgive themselves for procrastinating tend to procrastinate less next time.

03 What genuinely helps

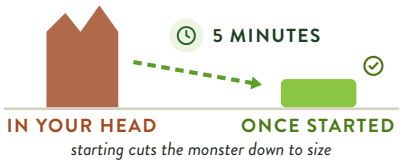
- A five-minute start, with permission to stop after
- Shrinking step one until it's almost silly
- Making it concrete: verbs, not vague nouns
- Removing friction: phone in another room
- Self-forgiveness after a slip, then restarting

A PRACTICAL STORY



THE ILLUSION

Bigger in your head



starting cuts the monster down to size

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

The five-minute door

1. Pick the task you're dodging
2. Set a five-minute timer, start ugly
3. At the bell: stop, or keep rolling

You only ever have to start.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If putting things off is costing study, work or peace of mind, or it travels with ADHD, anxiety or perfectionism, a psychologist can help. Ask your GP about a Mental Health Treatment Plan.

DID YOU KNOW?

Procrastinate comes from the Latin pro, meaning forward, and crastinus, meaning of tomorrow.

Oxford English Dictionary

THE KEY TAKEAWAY

You don't have to feel ready. You have to open the door for five minutes, and the feeling follows you in.

Need support right now? Lifeline **13 11 14** · Emergency **000** — available 24/7. More options: **mindhealth.com.au/urgent-help**

TALK TO US WHEN YOU'RE READY

Parramatta and online, Australia-wide · **Book at mindhealth.com.au**

1300 084 200

MH-CR-233 · v32 · October 2026
© 2026 Mind Health · General information, not medical advice · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0