

CSP E-Lesson 10, Fall 2008

Words of Wisdom: "I don't mind driving an old car and not eating out so much.

If I'll have more money later, I can put some things off."

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Gimme! Gimme!

"Come on Jason. Go back with me to the store with the awesome clothes! I have enough money to buy those jeans I want," Megan whines to her older brother. Jason struggles down the walkway of the mall with Megan tugging him in the opposite direction.

"No! Mom told us if we spend our money now, we won't have any left to buy things during our trip next week," Jason snaps and keeps moving forward, dragging Megan behind him.

"I don't care about taking a trip. I want those jeans right now!" Megan stamps her foot.

Jason stops and faces his sister. "Megan, you won't care about those jeans in a week or two, and then you'll want different ones. You're never satisfied! Why don't you just wait until after the trip and see if you still want them? You can save your money and buy them when we get back."

Jason shows an important sign of maturity—the ability to put off an immediate reward in order to gain a better, or bigger, reward later. This ability is called *delayed gratification*, and it is important for both professional and personal success.

Delaying gratification is a sign of emotional maturity. Young children, for example, have a harder time delaying gratification than older children. When kindergartners were offered the choice between getting a small candy bar immediately or a larger one later, 72% chose the smaller candy bar. Only 49% of third and fourth graders chose to eat a smaller bar now. By the fifth and sixth grades the number had fallen to 38%, nearly half the rate for kindergartners. (Survey from eNotes.com)

Everyone has delayed gratification at some time—putting off buying an iPod, or skipping a movie to save money.

Describe two times when you've delayed a gratification to gain a better reward later.

1. _____
2. _____

Watch Out for the Snake Pits

Life is a lot like an Indiana Jones movie. Just when you think you can take a breather, you suddenly face a pit of venomous snakes! Fortunately, most of us don't have to save ourselves from real snakes. Our snakes are self-defeating impulses that convince us to get what we want "right now" instead of waiting for something better in the future.

Like Indy, we must be able to recognize the dangers from the snakes. For example, a common danger for young adults is the snake pit of risky social behavior, such as drinking and driving, in order to be part of a crowd. In this case, the long term reward is staying alive.

We make choices to receive immediate gratification because we don't recognize the impulse snakes encouraging us to reward ourselves now. What bigger rewards could you receive later by delaying the gratifications listed below? Many answers will apply. Make your answers personal to your own life.

1. Buying popcorn, soda and candy at the theatre instead of eating afterwards.

2. Sleeping in until the last minute instead of getting up to review for a test.

3. Deciding not to take a college class that will help your career so the money can be used for new clothes.

4. Avoiding going for a promotion in another city because you want to stay close to your girlfriend.

Now think about your own need for instant gratification. List something you know you should give up now, even though it will be hard. Then list what you can receive if you delay gratification.

Thing to give up now: _____

Later reward: _____

Describe a situation related to education where you can do something now, even though it will be hard, that will help you achieve a better career.

Thing I can do now: _____

Later career reward: _____

Watch Out for the Snake Pits (Continued)

Describe a future career-related situation where you can practice self-discipline, even though it will be hard, in order to be more successful a few years away.

Current impulse to overcome: _____

Later reward: _____

Describe a health-related situation where delaying gratification and practicing self-discipline, even though hard, will have long-term rewards.

Immediate gratification that will be delayed: _____

Later reward: _____

Select three other examples in your life where practicing self-discipline and delaying gratification in the short term will result in long-term rewards. You may choose your own examples or select from these suggestions: athletics, social situations, family, spirituality, boyfriend/girlfriend, political, friendships, leisure activities. Make sure one example is about your future career.

1. Example: _____

2. Example: _____

3. Example: _____

Justification! Motivation!

No one ever said that self-discipline is easy, and self-discipline is what it takes to delay getting something you want immediately. The easy part is finding an excuse to justify why you should please yourself now.

You can learn to delay gratification. But you have to want to do it, and you have to practice. If you practice self-discipline every day, not acting on your impulses will get easier. Success, in whatever you want, will come faster.

One way to practice self-discipline is to analyze your excuses for impulsive behavior. Then, you can use what you learn about yourself to become more motivated to wait.

Simply magic!

Desiree's goal is to improve her health and self-esteem by losing weight. To achieve this long-term goal, she is trying to stop eating chocolates. Her impulse snakes are crawling around, though, trying to draw her into their pit:

"I feel down today and I want chocolate. (Impulse) Science shows that eating chocolate releases chemicals called endorphins that will raise my spirits. If I'm happier, I'll feel more like exercising." (Excuse)

What is wrong with Desiree's justification? Yes, chocolate does release endorphins, but so does exercise. Exercise will help her reach her better health and weight loss goals, but eating chocolates won't. How can Desiree turn her short-term justification into motivation to work toward her goal?

"I feel down today, so I'm going for an extra long walk. Science shows that exercise releases endorphins. Walking is good for depression; it will help me get over my chocolate craving and make me healthier."

Read the following situations and identify the flaw in each person's justification or excuse. Turn the flaw into a motivation that helps the person discipline himself or herself to delay gratification now in order to gain something better in the future.

Justification! Motivation! (Continued)

1. Eric's boss asks him to join a company-sponsored Stop Smoking Program because the company has to pay higher insurance premiums for employees who smoke. Eric's justification for avoiding the Stop Smoking Program is:

"I don't know why the insurance company cares so much about smoking, I could die in a car accident tomorrow, so what's the difference!"

What is the flaw in Eric's justification? _____

What is a motivation for Eric to gain self discipline? _____

2. Stuart needs another certification in order to be promoted at work. This means he will have to attend classes two nights a week and early Saturday mornings for six months. His justification for avoiding the sacrifice he would have to make now in order to gain in the long term is:

"I learn better on the job. The classes are so boring that I can't sit through them. Besides, I need Saturday morning free to earn extra money at my side job."

What is the flaw in Stuart's justification? _____

What is a motivation for Stuart to earn the certification? _____

Should you be sacrificing now in order to achieve a future goal?

What is your long-term goal? _____

What is the sacrifice or self-discipline that you can practice now? _____

What is your justification for not sacrificing now? _____

Identify the flaw in your justification. _____

What will motivate you to work toward your goal? _____

Bury My Credit Card in Peanut Butter

Trying to break a bad habit or form a good habit requires hard work and new ways of thinking.

For example, you know that using credit cards for impulse buying can lead to huge financial problems in the future. Guess what some people do to overcome their impulses to buy on credit? They freeze their credit card in a block of ice! Other people go even further; they bury their credit card in a jar of peanut butter! The hassle of retrieving the credit card from the peanut butter gives them a cooling off period, so they can think whether the purchase is really worth the trouble.

What creative ways can you come up with to practice self-discipline, delay gratification, or sacrifice now for a long-term reward? List your top three ideas for each instant gratification challenge below.

1. Martha likes to gossip at work. She knows she is alienating her co-workers, which is hurting her career, but she likes the excitement of gossiping. How can she control herself?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
2. When a problem arises at work, Paul takes the easy way out by asking other people to resolve the problem, instead of thinking it through and working out a solution himself. What can Paul do to resist the temptation to do things the easy way?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
3. Jaime earns a good income, but she drives an old car with dings and dents. The car's reliable, gets good fuel mileage and allows Jaime to put money into her savings account. Her friends try to tease her into buying a new car. They say, "You can afford it now. Why are you so cheap?" How can Jaime keep up her self-discipline in the face of peer pressure?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

Bury My Credit Card in Peanut Butter (Continued)

4. Elliot is an entrepreneur who started his own E-commerce Website. Experts have told Elliot that it will take a minimum of two years of hard work before he can judge the success of his venture. Even though Elliott has achieved half of his original goals in the first year, he feels like quitting because he's not racing ahead as fast as he wants. How can Elliott avoid the need for instant gratification and develop the persistence he needs to be a successful entrepreneur?
- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
5. Ben is a long-haul, 18-wheel truck driver. He wants to buy his own truck some day and become an owner-operator. When he's home, he likes to party with his friends, but his job requires him to be ready to take a random drug test with 24 hours' notice. If he's found with drugs or alcohol in his system, his career will be over. What choices can Ben make to practice the self-discipline he needs to achieve his goals?
- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
6. Shana gets self-esteem from having a boyfriend, but he's pushing her to have sex, which goes against her personal goal of waiting on sex until marriage. How can she keep her self-esteem and hold on to her beliefs?
- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
7. When Si's girlfriend begs him often to leave work early so he can be with her, he says he's sick and leaves. He's at risk of losing a promotion. How can he have a social life and get promoted?
- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Self-Disciplined or Self-Defeating

People who practice self-discipline and delay gratification in order to achieve a long-term reward usually are successful in both their career and personal life. They believe that achieving their goals is worth the work and the wait. To them, having their money grow over time is worth the sacrifice of budgeting; avoiding crippling illnesses is worth not smoking cigarettes; and having a successful career is worth giving up some social time with friends.

How do successful people practice self discipline? They decide which of their behaviors and actions will make life better and which ones are self-defeating. They get rid of the self-defeating behaviors and practice the others.

Place an "F" for "Future" by behaviors and attitudes that don't provide instant gratification but will help you practice self-discipline and make your future life better. Place an "SD" by self-defeating impulsive behaviors.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get up early and exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> Do the chores you hate first |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work smarter and harder | <input type="checkbox"/> Do the least work you can |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be friendly only with people who can help you | <input type="checkbox"/> Drive fast because it's exciting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Roll your eyes at people who frustrate you | <input type="checkbox"/> Stick to a healthy diet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to wait in a line if it is long | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer in your community |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Invest time and money in education | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid risky friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stay out late on a work night | <input type="checkbox"/> Spend a lot of time watching TV |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buy expensive clothes to impress others | <input type="checkbox"/> Practice your skills and talents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Set goals to meet | <input type="checkbox"/> Return anger with anger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Save part of your money every week | <input type="checkbox"/> Stop eating when you're full |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Live for today because you might die tomorrow | <input type="checkbox"/> Be punctual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Set clear goals | <input type="checkbox"/> Give part of your money to charity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take responsibility for where you are in your life | <input type="checkbox"/> Skip dessert |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat junk food | <input type="checkbox"/> Believe in yourself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Start achieving small goals and work your way up | <input type="checkbox"/> Finish tasks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help a child assemble a 4000 piece Lego™ set | <input type="checkbox"/> Keep your promises |

Eagles Eat Snakes

A good lunch for an eagle is a juicy snake. A way to overcome your impulse snakes is to let your self-discipline eagles overpower them. Beside the pictures of the snakes below, list your self-defeating behaviors and attitudes that will keep you from getting what you want in the future. Beside the picture of the eagles, list the actions that you need to take now to get you what you want in the future. Draw a star by each snake and eagle pair that you promise yourself to start working on today.




















