

NEWSLETTER

Volume 4, December 2020

TASK INITIATION

The Nightmare Before Finals

(A poem by a former procrastinator)

'Twas the night before finals when all through the house, not a creature was sleeping, not even the mouse. Canvas tabs were all open with hopes and with cheer, that missing assignments would all disappear. The student was panicked, typing away, with visions of passing saving the day!

If this poem sounds familiar to you, rest assured, you are not alone!

Task Initiation involves a complex set of skills that many of our students haven't yet mastered. Procrastination is something that we all struggle with from time to time.

The first step in helping your student overcome procrastination is to understand the cause of your student's reluctance to begin a task. Ask yourself and your student the following questions:

1. **Are there too many distractions?**
2. **Is the task boring?**
3. **Is the assignment difficult?**
4. **Does the student have the prerequisite skills to begin the task?**
5. **Are anxiety and perfectionism impacting your student's ability to begin?**
6. **Is something else affecting your student?**

Reduce Distractions & Create a Habit:

We can train our brains to initiate tasks by reducing distractions and establishing a set time and space for completing school work. Similar to a bed-time routine where we train our brains to prepare for sleep, task initiation can become a habit.

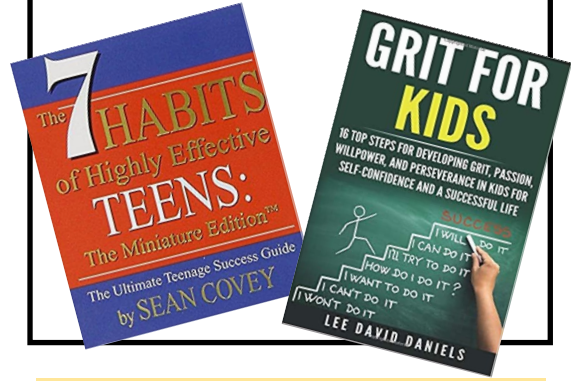
Fight Boring with Choice & Reward: Non-preferred activities are difficult to start. While we still need to complete the manner and order in which we complete these assignments. I like to reward myself for cleaning the kitchen with some T.V. time!

Break Down Difficult Assignments: As students become middle/high schoolers, assignments become more complex and multi-step. All those directions are overwhelming! Help your student decode assignments by working together to break the tasks into ordered steps. It may help to create a numbered list of the steps required to complete the assignment. Begin the task together.

Determine the Prerequisite Skills: Preparing a book talk is impossible if I haven't read the book! Algebra is impossible without knowing the order of operations!

Anxiety and Perfectionism: Some students are so concerned about how their final work will be judged that they delay the discomfort by not starting at all. Help your student develop a growth mindset by focusing on the process and rewarding growth rather than the final grade.

Book Recommendation



Questions for Students

What am I doing?

What do I need?

How can I start?

What do I do if I get stuck?

What strategies can I use to overcome obstacles?



The Next Step

Task Initiation Practice

“One of the best ways to help students build task initiation is to have them make a plan with a start time—and then document whether they started the plan when they said they were going to” (Peg Dawson, EdD).

Date	What will I do?	When will I start?	Where will I work?	Did it!
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