

Procrastinative

To be procrastinative is to make a habit of putting things off. Some people put off getting engaged, some people taking a trip to a dreamed of island, others getting that colonoscopy long recommended. Procrastination can spread like a virus within the individual; one avenue of postponement—let's wait til the social security check comes in—supporting a following avenue—let's wait for the trip to the Maldives til we have a real cushion, and can enjoy ourselves properly. To be procrastinative is not necessarily bad. Had I but put off my trip from St. Petersburg to Sharm-el-sheikh I'd be here talking to you today. Under normal circumstances, though, it would probably have been better to take the long dreamed of trip, for the money saved will like as not end up in unremembered expenses like a new motorcycle or a new model tuba.

Examples

1 A to-visit-list

I have lived for decades with a places-to-visit list. I have already gone through most of my check off items—Iceland, Macchu Picchu, China, Mauretania—and I have just two left, Russia and the DCR (Zaire.) I can no longer remember just why this or that region made it to the list, and the initial motives for the two remaining trips are by now obscure. They are obscure because I procrastinated in carrying out the trips. It has been fifteen years since I composed my list, and by now my original triggers are hard to remember. Can I recover the zest and discovery energy I had initially planned for, now that I have procrastinated these two trips. With luck, and flexibility, I will fall into those two trips, which will of course turn out to have been of totally different character and promise from what I originally expected. Whatever that was.

2 Pros and cons

I procrastinated on my colonoscopy. First, when I was fifty or so, my doc strongly recommended this procedure. In subsequent years he continued the discussion, but each time, it seems to me, in a tone more of suggestion than of strong recommendation. I, of course, kept procrastinating. By the time I was eighty my doc, the same one, said that truly the decision was up to me, and that there comes a point after which you might as well just go with the flow. That sounded good to me. It seemed to me procrastination had been a good idea. Of course if it had not been a good idea I would not have been in the present position of good-natured retrospection. I might have been the mortal victim of my procrastination. Is there in this tale a rule for future behavior? Should we procrastinate until our bodies or lives are hurting, then set things right?