Do you feel stressed because you keep putting off study and worry about failing? This brochure can help you to deal with procrastination, set goals, and become more motivated.

**Procrastination**

Procrastination is continually putting off the important stuff. It often leads to a cycle of stress and guilt and can prevent students from succeeding in their studies. So, if this is a problem for you, ask yourself:

- Do you have difficulty with time management and feel overwhelmed that you can’t get everything done?
- Is concentration difficult, or do you feel bored or tired when studying? If so, read the section over the page on motivation & goal setting.
- Do you put off starting studies because you worry you will fail, or expect yourself to achieve to a perfect (impossible) standard? If so, Examine your standards, and allow yourself to do your best, given the limits on your time and energy available.
- Do you worry about failing and have ‘unrealistic’ thoughts [eg: “It will be a disaster if I fail”?] If so, try replacing them with more encouraging statements: “If I make a good go of it, I will have a better chance of passing”.

- If you are struggling with personal problems, low self esteem, or other barriers, remember to make use of the **TAFE Counselling Service**, which can help you to manage study and personal issues.

**Motivation & goal setting**

To get motivated and inspired about your study, think about where it will get you [qualifications, career etc.] Take the time now to write down your study, career and personal goals – what do you want to achieve in six months and in two years time? Keep the following ‘SMART’ principles in mind when identifying your goals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple</th>
<th>Keep your goals short</th>
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<tr>
<td>Measurable</td>
<td>Write the goals in a way that enables you to know when you have achieved them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achievable</td>
<td>Make sure you can practically achieve them, given the resources that you have available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>Are your goals realistic, given your time constraints and responsibilities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timed</td>
<td>Set realistic time deadlines</td>
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An example study goal is: “In six months, I want to successfully complete the first half of my Certificate course”... and personal goal ... “see family once per week and exercise three times per week”

Display your goals somewhere you will regularly see, to keep you motivated and on track.

Taking action
After you are clear on your long term goals, it’s important to get the ball rolling with your shorter term goals:
- Daily goals: take five minutes each morning, or night before, to list the goals you want to achieve that day
- Rank the activities from highest to lowest priority
- Allocate an amount of time to each activity
- Start your list from the highest priority and mark off each completed
You will feel a sense of achievement at each task completed in this order. If you are worried that you have too much to do, making a start on this list is a terrific way to manage your stress.

Rewards
Every time you accomplish a step towards your study goals, you deserve a reward. This will also keep you feeling positive and motivated to continue your work.

How and when to use rewards:
- Reward yourself only after you have completed your daily study goals (eg. watch TV, call a friend, or have a cup of tea after study).
- Think of how you can reward yourself after completing your assignment and write it on your timetable. (reward examples may include: outings with friends, pampering or buying something for yourself, playing or listening to music).
- Make sure you do carry out the reward too!

Concentration and focus
Effective studying requires focus and optimum use of the time you have available. If you are finding it difficult to concentrate and notice yourself getting distracted, try these ideas.

Getting prepared:
- Review your long and medium term goals and take a moment to see yourself having achieved them.
- Have clear goals every time you sit down to study (eg. I will write three pages of my assignment)
- Keep your study space quiet, clutter-free and have everything you need at hand (stationery, computer, study notes and books etc).

Keep yourself focussed:
- Are you struggling to understand a topic? Be sure to seek help from teachers. See also ‘Study Skills’ brochure: Note Taking and Assignments
- Keep yourself interested – do you prefer to alternate your reading between different topics, or to focus on one subject at a time?
- Energy – are you a night or a morning person? Study when you’re able to concentrate best and have the least distractions.
- Remember to have regular mini-breaks during your study, to keep you fresh and focussed (eg. a five minute walk after one hour of study).

Where can I get further help?
- See brochure: Support Services for Students, which details free TAFE services including; the Adult Basic Education and Individual Learning Centre which provides tutoring, assignment help and classes to improve basic literacy and numeracy.
- The library can help you with research skills and has a Study Skills resource guide. Also, here are some study skills books available at the library:
  - Let’s Get Motivated – Handbook for Students, 14 to 40, by J. Dibley (370.154 DIBL)
  - Procrastinate Later: How to Motivate Yourself to do it Now, by M.E. Bernard (155.232 BERN)
  - Doing it Now. Action, not Excuses!, by E.C. Bliss (158.1 BLIS)
For links to study skills websites and online tutorials to develop research skills, go to: www.illawarra.tafensw.edu.au/library/libindex
TAFE Counsellors are also available, offering further support and guidance about study, personal issues and career direction.