

MODULE 3

Title: Procrastination - Part1 (1st part of a 2 lesson series)

Aim of Lesson: To understand the symptoms, triggers and cure of procrastination.

Category: Personal Development

Lesson Format: power point presentation

Handout: in folder

(Greeting to students) Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh

(Ta'awwuz) Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem

(Tasmiyah) Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem

(Du'a) Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli

(Surah Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

Material Needed:

- White board
- White board markers

Note to teacher: give each student a copy of the questionnaire and ask them to fill it out in 5 minutes.

Slides 1 - 2:

You were given a questionnaire right in the beginning of the class. And I had asked you to fill it out. Read all the statements and then add up all the numbers. After adding up all the numbers you will get your final score, I'm not going to ask what your final score is, that is for you to assess yourself. If your final score is between the numbers 21 to 30, then procrastination is reducing your productivity.

If your final score is between the numbers 11 and 20 then you are already aware of that procrastination creates a time constraint, there is room for improvement. And if you are get a final score is 10, then congratulations! You generally do things that you need to. So, why did we do this exercise?

Why this questionnaire? What does procrastination mean? That is exactly what we are going to talk about today. By filling up this questionnaire, you get a fair idea of whether you have the problem of procrastinating or not.

Slides 3 - 5:

What is procrastination? Who is going to tell me?

Student: Procrastination is something that you delay right till the end and then you do it or sometimes you don't even do it.

Teacher: Right. Anyone else who has a slightly different answer?

Student: To be lazy.

Teacher: There is fine line between procrastination and being lazy. *Insha 'Allah* if we have time we will take about that difference also. But our class predominantly today is on procrastination. Procrastination is putting off things that you should be focusing on right now. And why are you doing it?

1. Usually doing things that are more enjoyable.
2. You are more comfortable with doing something else.

So, either enjoyment or comfort makes you delay the work that is more important, for example, reading a book at the time when you are supposed to do your homework. Why the delay? You are procrastinating and delaying your homework and what is the reason behind it? Maybe because you enjoy reading a book more then you enjoy doing your homework. For example; your mom tells you to clean your room, and instead you go into the kitchen and start making a sandwich for yourself. So in this instance, you are procrastinating and delaying cleaning your room. And what is the reason for this delay? Maybe because you feel more comfortable making a sandwich then you are with cleaning your room.

Slide 6:

There are many ways to avoid being successful in life. Such as: being lazy, wasting your time is another one but you know, what is the most guaranteed way of being unsuccessful in life? Its procrastination and people who grow up procrastinating unfortunately miss out on lots of opportunities to be successful in life.

So, if your score on the questionnaire is not 10 or anything above 10, then you need to take this class very seriously. Do you agree on that?

I'm so tempted to ask, do we have anyone here who scored a 10 on their questionnaire? Yes? That's good! *Alhamdulillah*. Maybe you can help us out in giving solutions. If you scored a 10 then that's wonderful, very few people score a 10 on that questionnaire, by the way and I will give you the statistics. Very few people think that they have this problem. Some of us have a serious problem of procrastinating and there are others who are in between. Sometimes they do procrastinate and in other cases they don't.

Slide 7:

Procrastinators work as many hours as any other person. And often they are working longer but they invest their time in wrong stuff. It is not that they are not doing anything, they are very active and sometimes it is just that they don't know the difference between something that is important and something that is urgent. They tend to mix up the things: they think that anything

that is important is also urgent, and anything that is urgent is also important. This is the problem that they have. So for instance, you are watching your favorite TV serial. The last episode of the serial airs it at the time of *Dhuhr Salah*. Now, that program might be very important for you, but so is your *Salah*.

If it is the last part of the episode and the last part of *Dhuhr Salah*, then what happens? We have wrong priorities. We say: “Oh I must watch the serial! There is no way that I can miss it! I can pray *Dhuhr Salah* later.” So, they mess up their priorities in life. Now I am going to share a very classic example of procrastination. Watch this video very closely.

Slide 8: (Note to Teacher: Play Video)

Yes. He never got his stuff done. He had the intentions but there was something that was stopping him. Either he wasn't too serious about it or he didn't find the work interesting or it was very difficult. We are going to talk about the reasons why people procrastinate in the end also.

Student: Can procrastination sometimes be a good thing?

Teacher: How?

Student: There is this writer who wrote a book while he was procrastinating.

Teacher: Okay. If an author has written a very good book because he used to procrastinate at the cost of marking exam papers. Yes he had to mark the exam paper but he found that boring and he wrote an excellent book.

But the thing is did he do the thing that was more important. If I had to write a book at the cost of failing in exams, it wouldn't be worth it. I have to study for my exams and I say that I will study from tomorrow and I start writing a book, and the next day I say I still have time and the inspiration came in and sometimes the inspiration is nothing more than the insinuation coming from *Shaitan*. But it is up to you, you have to decide between the two things, what is more important. So, we have to see our cost and benefits.

Do you think it is a good idea? Writing an excellent book instead of doing the work you were actually supposed to do? Do you think you will get away with it? Let me give you a very simple example:

You have to submit an assignment to your teacher, your deadline is tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow you have to complete another pending task: an essay that you have to write for the school magazine and it also has a deadline to it. If you don't complete your assignment and instead that evening you sit and work on the essay that you have to give in for the school magazine and that essay actually fetches you an award, do you think it was worth it? Missing out something that you were actually supposed to do at that time?

People, who procrastinate, mess up their priorities. This is the biggest problem they have. They think that they have achieved so much but you have to see the cost for it. You have to break in a commitment, obviously if you don't give in your assignment, then what are the consequences?

You will be scolded or grounded, bad consequences if you have a dead line. If you don't have a deadline then it's absolutely fine, and it's not procrastinating. It is when you are delaying something, either you delay it to an extent where you hardly have any time left. We will also talk about that what to do when you don't have any time left for the work that you have delayed.

Slides 7 - 8:

Now why would people do that? Why do people procrastinate? Why can't people just buckle up and get the job done? Many procrastinators are actually convinced that they work better under pressure: "I can only do work when there is a deadline, and I'm right at the edge".

Have you heard people say that? "I can't do things until I'm not motivated enough, I feel bored." I have to take things right till the end: Like I will do my homework faster when I know that I can't delay it any further and my work is done like that!" A lot of people do that.

Slide 9:

You might say that it is the weekend and I will do it the next day. What happened in this case? The video clip that I showed you? The work did not get done. The work that he was supposed to did not get done. Usually this does happen and what are the results?

Damages, broken mugs, spilled milk, wrong calculations, and joined cookies. It just shows poorly done work and nothing else. So, the thing is that before you do anything under pressure or in haste, just try to remember that you will never get good quality results while trying to work in haste or under pressure.

And the idea that working under pressure improves the quality of work and allows the person to work better is the most common myth among procrastinators. They have this habit of waiting till the last possible moment to finish their tasks, thinking that in this way the quality of their work will improve.

Slide 10:

Now let's put this point to the test. Is it really true that quality of work is badly affected when something is done in haste, as compared to when there is no haste to finish the work? Let's just do a small exercise and see: I want two people to come up here. Since, you are very good on stage so, I want you to come over here and you as well.

What you two need to do is that you need to tie this scarf the way you do for your *Salah*. This is yours and this is yours. You are not going to do it together. I'm going to give you different time limit to each of you;

The timespan that will be given to you will be different from hers. One student is going to wrap the scarf in 20 seconds, and for the other student, I'm going to give you three seconds. The rest of you will tell her when to stop. And the two of you can begin... now. Ok.

What kind of results did you get? This was a small exercise to show you that no matter how good you are at a task, if you try to complete in haste, your performance will get badly affected. If one of you feels this is not the case for me, in reality this situation applies to everybody. No matter how good you are at something. No matter how fast you are. It could be your homework, your assignment or *Salah*. It could be anything. Anything that you do in haste can never turn out good.

Slide 11 - 13:

Have we reached to a general consensus on the fact that we need ample time to get good results? Yes? Any doubts about it? No. Then, the other problem that these procrastinators have is that: they have a fear of failure. And because of that they don't have the required talent or the skill to do the task at hand. This is the fear that they have: procrastinators would rather see themselves lacking in efforts than lacking in ability.

"Well, I didn't prepare myself for the test or else I would have gotten better marks than you": this is a very convenient excuse. For them lack of effort is a very precious excuse, they keep it handy whenever it is required. So, if you flunk in mathematics paper then very loudly blame it on the half an hour blitz that you have in preparing for the math's test.

Rather than, actually admit to the fact that that you could have hired a tutor to help you or you could have given it more time towards preparing for it. So, they conveniently give the excuse that the effort that they put into the task was not enough.

Slide 15:

Some procrastinators enjoy this adrenaline rush that they get: the tension that you feel when you do something right at the edge. Now what is this adrenaline rush? They are risk takers but what is this rush? How many of you have actually seen the movie '2012'? Don't you think it was a Punjabi movie translated into English?

Very unrealistic? Extremely unrealistic. Despite knowing that it is a movie and that it is not possible in real life and every time that guy was made it right to the edge, how did you feel? That he going to fall! That is adrenaline rush that you get. That's the feeling and people enjoy that. You get this kind of rush when you watch thriller movies, where there is a limited time span and you need to do something within that limited time span.

Slide 16:

There is another program that is: 'A Minute to Win it'. What happens in that? It's very exciting for the contestants and the viewers. Why? There is a very short time span given to them, to

complete a certain task, so that's the rush that you get. This adrenaline rush that one gets when doing things in a limited time span: is the very reason procrastinators delay their work right till the end. They find a strange kind of satisfaction when they complete their work just few seconds before the dead line.

A guy in the movie '2012' had a couple of hours or days to finish all his work and you could tell he was a nervous wreck about the task at hand. Even though that wasn't happening in real life you must know that delaying your work and procrastinating about it is not good for you. We are also going to be talking about the negative impact on our health for taking things right till the end also.

Slide 17:

Another form of procrastination is to feel overwhelmed by the task. You find that task very difficult; you don't know where to begin from? They will start a painting and then it will be lying in the corner as they are just too overwhelmed by the task to be able to complete it: "I don't know where to go from here?"

"I'm at a loss", so a lot of things are incomplete in their lives because they don't know where to begin from." Or you doubt yourself that maybe you don't have the skills that are required for that task. So, you seek comfort in tasks that are easy to do or easy to complete.

Slide 18 – 19:

This is another quality that procrastinators have: some people actually don't take science subjects in school, and you know what the reason is for that? The reason is that they don't want to take anything challenging. They have the intelligence but they don't want to use it. I tell my children if you feel capable about doing something then Allah (swt) has given you the intelligence to do it and this is not an excuse to take an easier way or path for yourself. If you have an inclination towards arts subjects then it's absolutely fine. But just because you think you can't do sciences as it would be tough for you, then no! It's not a good idea to avoid taking science subjects, because this is what the procrastinators do.

Slide 20:

There is an American political cartoonist, his name is Fiore, and he says that humans avoid that which is difficult and boring. That is very normal thing. I would hate to do something that is hard or tough. Everyone hates to do things that are boring, as far as difficult things are concerned: there are a lot of high- achievers who love doing difficult stuff, as that becomes a challenge, you know these kids who are very good at mathematics, and they want challenging questions. They enjoy challenging questions; they are thrill seekers, which is absolutely fine.

So, what is the reason that you would delay doing your homework and not delay going for swimming? Enjoyment. Some of you may delay cleaning our room but you wouldn't delay

wearing the smart outfit that mum bought for you, you immediately go and try that out. Why? Boredom. You don't enjoy it. We delay *Salah* but we don't delay eating if we are hungry. So, it's either lack of interest or you find that particular job very boring.

Slide 21:

Several symptoms of depression also feed procrastination. Some people when they are sad or depressed that in itself stops them from doing a lot of stuff that they are supposed to do. A very common example: you got lousy grades in a particular subject now your way of procrastinating would be sitting and whining about it and not really doing anything about it, because now the challenge for you is overcoming the difficulty you face in studying to get better grades. So sometimes, it is the depression that makes you procrastinate: when you feel low you really don't want to do anything. You are in misery but you are just sitting there. And what we don't realize is that when we don't do anything there will be no solution.

Slides 22 – 23:

According to a survey 20% people identified themselves as chronic procrastinators. When I say chronic procrastinators, I am talking about that first slot in your evaluation. 20%! That is like a big number. Think about it. So this is a problem which is quite common, and sometimes we don't realize that we have this problem. And then when we look at people who are successful in their lives then this could be the deciding factor, this could be the reason that they are so successful and we are not.

It could be that we procrastinate and waste a lot of time. So, people who procrastinate actually don't complete their assignments on-time, everything is incomplete and they leave the *Eid* shopping for *Chandraat* (night before *Eid*). For such people, reaching for an appointment or reaching class on-time is not a big deal. So what if I am five minutes late? So, procrastinators are not always sitting idle they just keep themselves busy in things that are less important.

Slide 24:

Now the other thing that: we must know what this problem is right now before we go in college. Well college seems to bring out this problem of procrastination a lot. There was a survey done and 70% students identify themselves as procrastinators. So if you think you have this problem then you need to solve it right now.

Because in college due to so much of pressure and distractions and other stuff, students do tend to procrastinate and that is not good for their grades, it's not good for their productivity. So, it wouldn't really help you to get your things done when you know that procrastination is not really good for your health. But I'm going to give it a shot; you must know how it impacts our health.

Slides 25 - 26:

Putting things off actually creates a very high level of stress in our bodies, and stress is not good for our immune system. I hope you know that. How many students here study science subjects in school? So I'm sure you all are aware of the fact that stress is not good for your health. It breaks us and reduces our productivity, and that is what procrastination does:

It puts you at the risk of very poor health and the other reason is that a person becomes really unhealthy. The reason for this is: just as procrastinators delay other stuff, they also delay going to the doctor. So, generally speaking a chronic procrastinator cannot be healthy because they delay going to the doctor.

Procrastination weakens your immune system and also makes you wake up in the middle of night, disturbing our sleep. A lot of procrastinators can't sleep well. They sleep but they don't sleep well, that's another problem that they have. So do you think it's worth it? It has so many ill effects on our health and specially girls of your age.

You should be up and about, very energetic and if you think you feel low all the time may be that is the reason, maybe you procrastinate.

Slide 27:

Procrastinators are not born, they are made. So you can't say that: "I procrastinate because my dad used to procrastinate as well, it runs in the family." It is not hereditary, but having said that this itself is good news as well as bad news. Can anyone tell me what the good news is?

Student: If you're born that way then usually you can't do much about it but if you're not then you can do something to change it.

Teacher: So is that a good point? Yes. If you have made it a habit or developed it in your life then you can undo it.

Slide 28:

Anything that is done in this world can be undone, but if you're born with certain traits, for e.g. if you're born with freckles on your skin, you can't do anything about it, if you're born with curly hair and you like straight hair then you can't do much about it, nowadays you can do a lot of stuff with your hair, but things that you're born with, e.g. you're very tall, extremely tall, six feet, can you just sharpen yourself from both ends to reduce your height? But if you have developed something then you can undo it, but there is a bad thing in it as well.

The bad news is that when you develop a habit, it is possible that you might get rid of this habit but you don't necessarily feel transformed internally. That will be a constant effort on your behalf not to procrastinate, but that is absolutely fine, as long as you are achieving the end-result.

What is the end-result that we want to achieve? We MUST not be procrastinating, that is the whole idea.

(Note to Teacher: the rest of this class was done on the white board)

We have got seven, eight minutes to complete our first part, what we are going to do is, before we proceed, we are going to make a list of all the things on which one can procrastinate. We are not talking about ourselves;

We are talking about general things on which people of your age procrastinate. Let's just make a list first. You will be telling me what to add to the list and I will write it down here on the white board for everyone to see. Okay so, homework, cleaning, auditions... what type of auditions?

Student: Just auditions, generally there are trials for everything.

Teacher: So you procrastinate for trials?

Student: In working for it, in preparing for something.

Teacher: In preparation for something, let's just write preparation, homework/ studies/ exams, what else?

Student: A lot of people procrastinate when they have to read something.

Teacher: Reading, why do they have to procrastinate when they have to read?

Student: They find reading boring.

Teacher: Yeah...okay, yes, performing your five daily *Salah*. What else?

Student: People who promise to do something and don't keep their promises.

Teacher: Fulfilling our commitments. What else?

Student: Going to school.

Teacher: Do you procrastinate about going to school?

Student: I don't, but I know people who do.

Teacher: What about coming to 'Perceptions'? No? Somebody said yes. So I am going to write that down as well. Coming to 'Perceptions'. We have to be brutally honest here. What else?

Student: Projects?

Teacher: Yes, projects.

Students: Waking up for *suhoor*.

Teacher: Yes, waking up for *suhoor*.

Student: Or waking up for your *fajr* prayers.

Teacher: Waking up for your *fajr* prayer.

Student: Obeying someone's order?

Teacher: Alright, Obeying parents/ teachers.

Student: Getting something, for e.g. school wants us to get something and we procrastinate.

Teacher: That also comes under the heading of school projects.

Student: Shopping.

Teacher: Who procrastinates in shopping?

Student: While doing groceries.

Teacher: So, do you do the grocery shopping?

Student: Yes, I go with my mom.

Teacher: So, wouldn't your mom procrastinate about it, not you?

Student: No...

Teacher: Ok, we'll just write that down.

Student: Changing your clothes...like uniform.

Teacher: Changing your uniform. That is one problem that you all have. Coming home and procrastinating and roaming around, my son does it as well. What else?

Student: Going outside and being energetic.

Teacher: Yes... exercising. It is really essential for you. You just exhaust brain cells in front of the TV but you don't go out to get some fresh air. And that is not good. You know it is good for you to go out and enjoy yourself or go to the gym but you don't do it, and you keep procrastinating and what is the reason behind it? You are bored.

Student: It is too much of an effort.

Teacher: Yes. Anything else? Think. Think. Would anyone like to add something else to the list, that you feel people delay doing on time? Alright, we have pretty much everything on the board. These are the general problems that people procrastinate about. Hey! How about make a list of certain things that we have to do from the religious point of view?

Student: Making up for the fast, like the ones that we may have skipped.

Teacher: Yes, making up for the fasts that one has skipped. Ask yourself, are you doing everything you are commanded to do in Islam? And the things that you are not doing, is it because you feel that they not important? Or is it because you think it is important but you don't feel like doing it? Yes? So, what comes to your mind?

Is there anything that you should be doing and you're not doing it? And you're not doing it because you find that thing boring or very difficult. Hmm? How about covering yourself? Have all of us actually started covering our heads? And if you haven't as yet then what is stopping you? Is it because you feel it is not important? It is not part of Islam?

Student: Teacher, it is so hot!

Teacher: Okay, so that is difficulty, and I want you to keep that thing, and I am going to talk about this particular excuse later on in the class. So, do remind me when we meet in the class. Anyways, oh! Its fine, it is absolutely fine. There is nothing to laugh about and this is a valid reason. When I say valid reason I mean this is one of the reason why people don't cover up their heads.

Student: It does get hot.

Teacher: It does, but then, do you think you will be able to justify for not covering yourself up? Imagine yourself standing on the Day of Judgment in front of Allah (swt), you see people around you. Just for a mere excuse that it was too hot to cover yourself, who didn't actually make an effort to cover themselves up, it is as hot for them as it is for you right now?

And you stand there and say "Allah (swt), you know what? I would have done it, but it was very very hot." And then do you think Allah(swt) would say: " that is absolutely fine sweetie, you find it hot, you go in *Jannah*, and you all who were covering yourself. Also, find it hot and you didn't make the effort to cover yourselves, you too go in the same level of *Jannah*."

Does it makes sense? It does not! Do you think that justifies your actions? That you didn't cover yourself because it was too hot? No! So, the inconvenience that you have in the case where you're supposed to do something obligatory can't be a valid reason for you on the Day of Judgment. You must always remind yourself on that.

So, coming back to it to the ones who haven't started wearing the *hijab* up till now, what is the thing that is stopping them? Is because of boredom or difficulty? Maybe it's because of difficulty. For a procrastinator can s/he be excused from doing certain job just because it's difficult? No, you have to do what you have to do.

A lot of us are not comfortable in doing certain things, there is a long list that I can give you in which you are not comfortable in doing but you still do it. There are times when you don't feel like going to school but you still go, because you have to go.

There are times when you don't feel like taking medicines but you take it, because you have to take it. So this concept that we have that I have to enjoy whatever I do and only then I will do it is not part of our Islam. In fact, the ones who feel hotter will get more reward, but this cannot be an excuse for any of us to not wear *hijab*, it cannot be an excuse on the Day of Judgment. Alright? Think about it.

So covering ourselves properly is an essential part of Islam that all of us have to do and perhaps the reason why we haven't done it yet is because we are simply procrastinating. This is like a very serious thing. You mustn't take this issue lightly. Okay we will just take a break here and continue in the next class, *Insha'Allah*.

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillahi Rabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*