

Time Management and Effectiveness in Grad School



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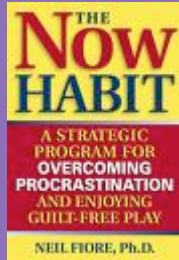
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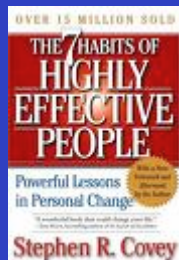
Effectiveness and Time Management

- Why time management matters in *grad school*
 - Many directions for research
 - Many distractions
 - High flexibility in managing your time
- Problems with time
 - I have time but don't use it right
 - Procrastination, confusion, lack/loss of motivation
 - I have too much work and feel like drowning
 - Too many deadlines, lack of focus, stress and anxiety

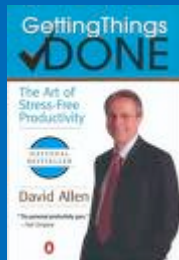
Ideas from ...



- The Now Habit
- Neil Fiore



- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People
- Stephen R. Covey

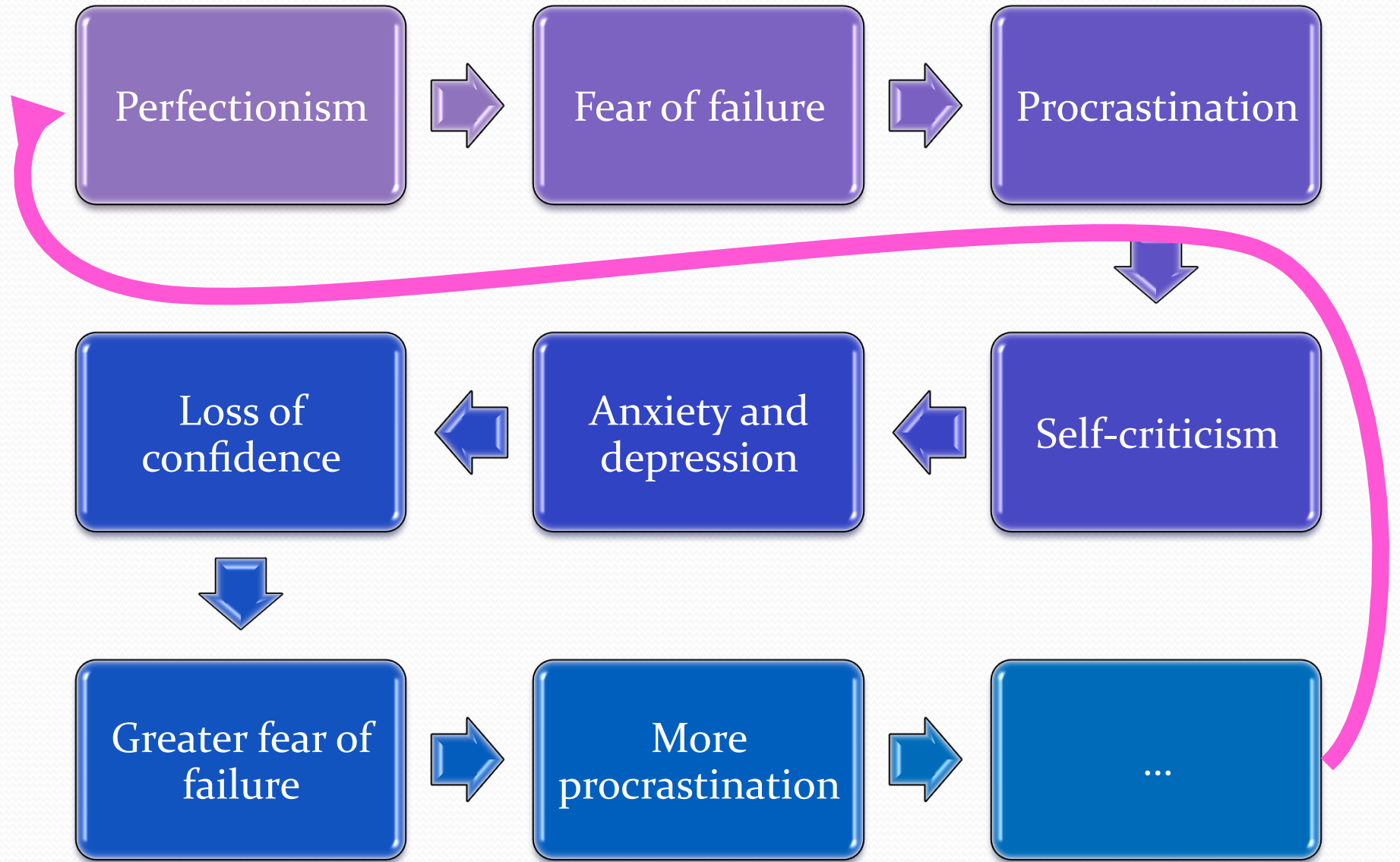


- Getting Thing Done
- David Allen

Why We Procrastinate

- Perfectionism
- Fear of ...
 - Failure
 - Success
 - Conflict, and judgment
- Rewarding
 - Painful work
 - Work completed by someone else
 - Work becomes unnecessary
 - Difficult decisions will be made for you
 - Indirect way of resisting pressure from authorities

Procrastination Cycle



Walk a Board Metaphor

- Situation A
 - 30cm wide, 20m long, on the ground
 - OK to walk even run
- Situation B
 - Same as A, 100m high
 - Now it's scary! 😊
- Situation C
 - Same as B, building on fire
 - Now it's for real
 - Fear of failure goes away
 - Fear of imperfection goes away
 - Focus on solution not worry



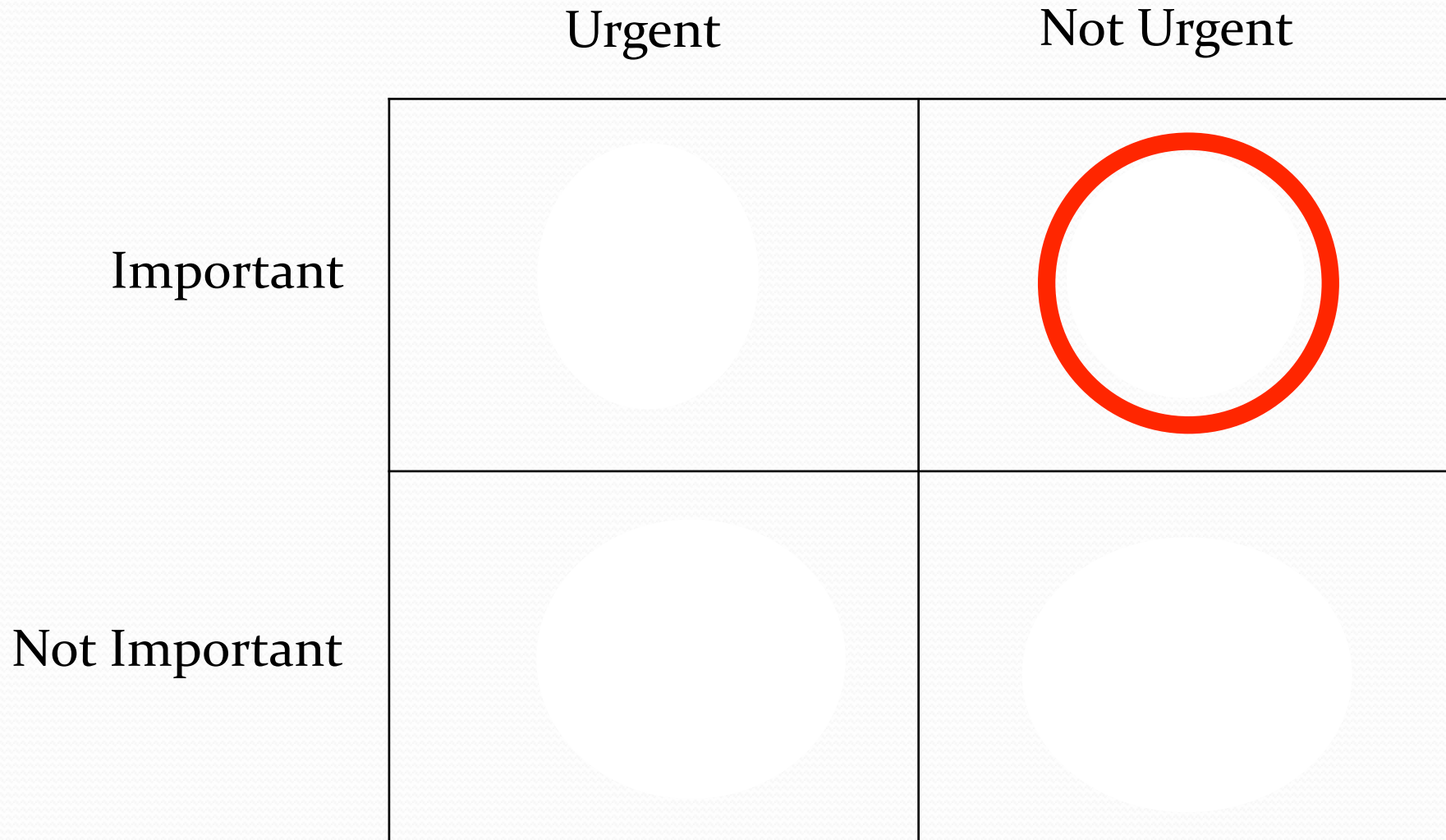
Procrastinator's Pattern

- Raise the board
 - Perfectionism
- Get frozen
 - Fear of failure, ...
- Set building on fire
 - Increase urgency/threat bigger than fear of failure
- Move!

Breaking the Pattern

- Situation D
 - Same as B, no fire, *support net*
 - Can be OK with a bit of practice
- Support net
 - It's OK to be imperfect
 - It's OK to fail
 - You can always recover
 - Sense of worth

Quadrant II Time Management



Examples

| | Urgent | Not Urgent |
|---------------|---|--|
| Important | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignments, exams • Deadlines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper submissions • Course projects • ... • TAs • ... | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Reading papers • Writing up your results • Attending talks, seminars, ... • Physical exercise • Leisure • ... |
| Not Important | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interruptions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone ringing • IMs, SMS • Some e-mails • Some TV shows • Updating Facebook status! • ... | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Games • Web surfing • Browsing OSNs • Most TV shows • Some e-mails • ... |

Results

| | Urgent | Not Urgent |
|---------------|--|--|
| Important | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress • Sleep problems • Health problems • Burnout • Out of control <p style="text-align: right;">I</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Perspective • Balance • Control <p style="text-align: right;">II</p> |
| Not Important | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of control • Short-term focus • Feeling victimized <p style="text-align: right;">III</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependence • Irresponsibility • Loss of focus • Lack of motivation <p style="text-align: right;">IV</p> |

Top-down vs. Bottom-up Approaches

- Quadrant II time management
 - Top-down
 - Identify priorities
 - Set goals, plan according to what matters

- GTD
 - Bottom-up
 - Cope with high load by creating a workflow
 - Remove the need to remember, relieve stress
 - Planning and priorities happen during reviews

Getting Things Done – Surviving High Work Load

- Task or action item
 - Something that can be done in one step
- Project
 - A collection of action items with a specific goal
- Next action item
 - An action of a project that you can immediately start working on
- Contexts
 - What you need to work on a task
 - Example: @Work, @Home, @Phone, ...

Time Management Tools

- ClearContext
 - Microsoft Outlook
 - Nice integration of calendars, to-do lists, notes, projects, ...
- GTDInbox
 - Firefox addon, manage everything in Gmail
 - Not as many features as some other applications
- iGTD
 - Standalone application for Mac
 - Free, but unfortunately not maintained anymore
 - Closest alternative: THINGS
- Omnifocus
 - Great flexibility, steep learning curve
 - Mac application accompanied by nice iPad and iPhone apps

The Trap

- Your goal is to get things done but you may ...
 - spend a lot of time finding the right tool
 - spend a lot of time learning and getting used to the new tool
 - spend a lot of time moving your existing tasks, projects, ... to the new tool
- But when it comes to actually doing, you might go back to old habits.
- Remember, these are just *tools* meant to help with *getting things done*.



Thank you!

How do you manage your time?