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A message from the counselor for international students No.10

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The Psychology of Procrastination

My acquaintances and colleagues sometimes send me their books and papers. When I have time, I read them and promptly give my impression to them by email or postcard. One day my former boss sent me a book which he spent much time researching and writing. I thought I should send positive feedback that would help validate his work. This thought resulted in procrastination and a delay in sending my impressions to him. I felt guilty about not responding sooner. He must have been worried about whether his book was delivered or not. The postcard which I sent several months later started with my excuse for not writing back more swiftly. I should have written sooner with a few words saying, "I've received your book. I'm looking forward to reading it." After this whole experience, I abandoned the idea of trying to give unique feedback that would help to validate the author's work.

When I was a pupil at elementary school, I put off doing my New Year's holiday homework. That homework was writing the 9 times multiplication table every day. I thought it was, "too much" "boring" "troublesome" and "I can compensate for one or two days, because I have two weeks of holiday". Those ideas made me procrastinate. I had to write the multiplication table 24 times until midnight on the last day of the holiday to finish the homework.

In the first episode, the prioritization should be the main focus. Priority should be given to informing the sender of receiving the book rather than concerns about providing unique feedback. When we pay too much attention to the quality, ideas such as, writing perfect, unique or nice things, we tend to become stagnant.

In this kind of situation, the strategy is making clear which comes first, promptness or quality.

In the second episode, quantity is the problem. We tend to become reluctant when we are forced to do so many things at one time.

In this kind of situation, two strategies should be adopted. The first strategy involves managing the workload into bite size pieces and starting the work once this strategy is in place. The second strategy focuses on a wide range of environmental factors. These include how and where we work, and who we work with to complete a task. (For more details, please refer to the previous messages No. 2 and 5.)

In this issue, I have examined ways of stopping procrastination in terms of prioritization and managing quantity.

*To make an appointment, please contact the Center for Health Services. ☎:045-339-3153