

Social and Emotional Learning

Lesson Title: Task Initiation Self-Survey

Grade Level: High School

Project and Purpose

Students analyze and develop a plan to improve their task initiation skills.

Essential Question

What are some strategies you can use to improve your task initiation skills?

Materials

- **Task Initiation Survey**
- Slides:
 - Task Initiation Definition and statement
 - According to experts in the field...
- Article excerpt: **4 Strategies to Improve Task Initiation** by Carey Heller, PsyD

Teacher

1. Distribute the survey and ask students to read each side by side statement and check the box on the right of the statement that best describes them. Emphasize that this is NOT a quiz, but they will use the survey during today's session.
2. When they have completed the survey, introduce today's topic as "Task Initiation" and ask the students what they think this means. Post the definition and statement by Edy McGee:

Task initiation is the skill or ability to start a project, job, assignment, or other task without procrastinating or putting it off.

Everyone at one time or another has experienced problems with task initiation.

3. Ask students their thoughts on the definition and then ask if they agree or disagree with the statement about all people.
4. Post the **According to experts in the field...** slide. Have students take their survey and match the statement they checked to one of the skills listed on the slide. What does this tell them about their own skills?
5. Discuss importance of task initiation skills in school and in the professional world. Points should include:
 - a. Being able to initiate tasks simplifies life — you can check things off your list and move on to more enjoyable things.
 - b. Tasks are easier to accomplish if you can start them and break them into chunks
 - c. Employers look for people who can use their own initiative to get things done.

Task Initiation

Task initiation is the skill or ability to start a project, job, assignment, or other task **without** procrastinating or putting it off.

Everyone at one time or another has experienced problems with task initiation.

According to experts in the field of task initiation, by high school, students should be able to:

- **Keep track of homework and long term projects and manage their time**
- **Gather needed materials for homework and projects**
- **Complete homework and projects without organizational support from parent or other adult**
- **CHUNK long term assignments**
- **Set short and long term goals and self-monitor progress**
- **Reflect on previous actions and strategies prioritize based on perceived impacts of doing vs not doing a task**

Article: 4 Strategies to Improve Task Initiation

By: Carey Heller, PsyD (June 19, 2015)

Here are four strategies to help facilitate task initiation:

1. Break down large tasks into parts.

Create a schedule of when you will do each part or set a deadline for when each part should be completed. For some individuals, an hour-by-hour breakdown of their day that notes when specific tasks should be completed is the best way to ensure that they get completed. For other individuals, having to follow an hour-by-hour schedule may seem daunting and annoying. Thus, one modification of this strategy is to estimate how long each scheduled task will take and list each part of the task on a piece of paper with the time needed to complete the parts. One can begin tasks at his or her leisure as long as sufficient time is allowed to complete what is needed. This method may be more difficult to follow through on, but having a moderate amount of structure sometimes is enough to initiate completion.

2. Set up motivators that encourage you to complete tasks.

For homework or household tasks, forgo watching a television show, playing video games, or doing something else of interest until a specific task is completed. If the task requires running an errand, identify a small reward to motivate you to complete the errand. For instance, if you have to go to the library, tell yourself that if you go, you can treat yourself to frozen yogurt.

3. Work in an environment consistently associated with work.

The setting in which you complete homework or other tasks is important. If completing tasks requiring sustained focus, make sure you are working in a quiet area. Ideally, if you can complete tasks in an area that you use only for this type of work, you can train yourself to focus better knowing that when in that area, you are supposed to be working. If you were to try to complete homework while sitting in front of the television in the family room, chances are you'd be more focused on turning on the TV than working.

4. Reduce distractions.

Switch your cell phone to silent mode, turn it off, or put it in another room. Being tempted to check email, text, open a notification from an app, and so forth will draw your attention away from the task at hand. All the time you take to check your phone and get back on task is wasted time, and it adds up to quite a bit of time if working for a few hours or more.

In general, if beginning tasks is difficult for you, look at what things stop you or get in the way. Are there specific distractions? Is there boredom with the task at hand? Do you have trouble understanding the directions? Something else?

Identifying the causes of your task initiation difficulty and developing behavioral strategies.

Activity: Self-designed Task Initiation Improvement Plan
Grade Level: High School

Name _____

"I will..." statement	Checkpoint Dates	Yes	No