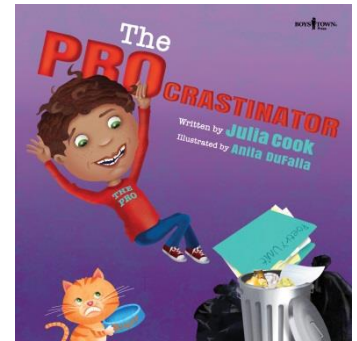


How many of us have had the joy of being told that science project, you know ... the one with the flour plaster volcanoes ... is actually due tomorrow? Yes, your child knew when it was due three weeks ago and even mentioned it once to you in passing, but did you really imagine that you would be reminded about it at 8:00 p.m. the night before it had to be done? I know you weren't expecting it because my wife and I were never expecting the same sort of surprises when we became victims of our son's procrastination.

Let's see what tools in our parental arsenal we've tried up to this point to get our kids not to put off every important task until the last possible moments: Endless reminding hasn't worked. Even threats of taking away privileges that will never be seen again didn't fix it either. Some of our kids are just so good at procrastinating they've become pros at it. And it doesn't just apply to schoolwork. There are always the bedrooms that never get cleaned and trash to be taken out despite solemn oaths that they will all get done "in just a little while."

If our kids could articulate what their behavior has already told us they would say "But I can't do it now, not when there are so many other things that I could be doing that would be so much more fun." And that's a big part of the problem. Kids are often distracted by opportunities to engage in more immediately rewarding activities than doing schoolwork or cleaning their rooms. Our task as parents becomes teaching them a strategy that allows them to do both.

Award winning children's author Julia Cook addresses this very issue in her recent book *The PROcrastinator*, published by the [Boys Town Press](#). The lead character Norman David Edward, better known as Noodle, finds it so hard to feed his cat, take out the trash, and (especially) get his homework done when there are a lot better things to do instead. So Noodle puts them off until he is hopelessly behind on homework and has a very hungry, angry cat. Noodle's mom says he has become so good at procrastinating that now she considers him a pro at it. A PROcrastinator.



In the end, Noodle's mom teaches him a strategy to manage his days and all of his responsibilities, all while still having plenty of time to play new video games with his friends. The trick is in figuring out what can be accomplished in under two minutes and getting those things done before anything else. Noodle also learns how to break bigger tasks into smaller parts that are easier to get done as well. This is a great strategy that all parents can use with their children who may be inclined to put things off until the last minute.

Of course, one of the most important things we parents can do is recognize when our kids are taking care of their responsibilities right away and really praise them for their efforts. This is especially true when we see them making steady progress on long-term goals such as working on a school project, studying for an upcoming test, etc. Parents can even set up rewards to be earned for their kids' consistency in completing household responsibilities without being asked repeatedly. What happens when we use these sorts of strategies for encouraging responsibility and good planning? Less reminding and frustration on our part as parents and better teaching our children the skills they'll need to be successful in school and out in the "real world."

Originally posted in [The Corner on Character](#).