

Samuel Bradshaw

13 April 2009

Eng T 231-001

### **Personal Application Paper**

There are several things I've been working on this year – goals, to keep myself healthy and to be a productive student. For this assignment, I decided to focus on three goals, for three different weeks. From February 22 to 28, my challenge was to “take action on ideas.” From March 31 to April 6, I chose the heading “Doing” from one of the articles studied. Then, from April 7 to today (April 13), I followed the “dilemma resolution procedure” from one of the readings.

#### **Take Action on Ideas**

This goal is one of the 360 Assessment challenges – number 12 under Personal Challenges: “Take action on ideas.” Specifically, my idea was that I didn't get enough sleep, and that I was getting to bed too late at night. Taking action on the idea meant setting a specific deadline to go to bed by, and trying to meet that goal.

My goal was that I would get to bed by midnight. Before this week, my time for going to bed had been getting progressively later, such that 2:00 or 3:00 AM was a normal time to be up and working on homework. My roommate also gets to bed pretty late, which made this goal more difficult. I set my watch alarm for 11:00 each night, to remind myself to get ready for bed. It did work somewhat, though not as well as I hoped – I didn't reach my goal of midnight every night, but I was able to get to bed significantly earlier than the preceding weeks. It was somewhat of a success.

After that week with the challenge, unfortunately, I progressively began to get to bed later again. I decided to try the goal again, even though the official challenge week was past. This time I tried a new technique. I use a calendar program on my computer to keep track of when things are scheduled. So, I set an alarm to alert me at 10:00 each night (because I am usually on my computer around that time). I still have that alarm set as a calendar item, but I'm still struggling to get to bed earlier. I'm still not quite satisfied with my sleeping time. But the alarm reminds me and helps me to get to bed earlier, if not as early as I would like.

### **Doing**

This goal is based on the heading "Doing," in the BYU speech *Theology and Technology*, by Thomas L. Erikson. One of my weaknesses is procrastination. I sometimes put off big assignments and projects until the last few days or even hours – for example, this project. Assigned at the beginning of the semester, it is supposed to be a three-week project. It is, but just barely – two of the three weeks are the last two weeks of the semester.

So, by "doing" I intended to do my homework earlier during the week, giving myself more time and putting off procrastination. I did better that week than the weeks before and after, in terms of procrastination. I actually got things done early. I like days when I get a lot of things done, but it is hard to bring myself to do homework assignments unless I'm in the right mood – to quote Calvin from the *Calvin and Hobbes* comic strip – "last-minute panic." This is something I'm working on still.

### **Dilemma Resolution Procedure**

In the reading was a chapter called "A Dilemma Resolution Procedure." It outlines a process for solving a problem. This is the goal I have been working on for the past week. My dilemma is that I spend too much time on trivial things and not enough on things like homework.

I spend several hours each week playing the piano, for example; also, I spend a lot of time reading news articles and blog entries online.

This week has been better. I only played the piano for about 1.5 hours (that's an estimate). I cleaned my desk up, which had been gathering piles for weeks, which made me more productive and helped me to make better use of my time and to avoid things on my desk that could distract me.

Another time-waster was the internet. For news and blog articles, I have an RSS feed reader program, which automatically downloads entries from several news feeds. I had carelessly been adding interesting news sites and blogs to the RSS feed reader, and the number of feeds coming in was such that I had close to 100 new articles coming into the reader every day. Clearly, going through all of those articles wasn't a productive way to spend my time. A couple of weeks ago I deleted several of the news feeds; now I only get 30 or so articles every day – which is easily manageable (most of them are pretty short too – not full-length articles). I have also set some day-to-day goals to get items of homework done before I check my email or catch up with my friends on Facebook. I deleted an online Twitter account I had set up a month or so ago. Essentially, I have simplified my online tasks and decreased my use of the internet for unproductive activities.

## **Conclusion**

In all, these three challenges or goals have proved successful. I haven't quite reached my goals in all areas, but I've made improvements and gotten closer to reaching my goals. All three of these goals affect all areas of my life, so as I continue to improve – as I get more sleep, procrastinate less, and eliminate excess distractions – the quality of my life will improve. I'm still working on all three of these goals.