

Here are some timely tips to help all late arrivers

In an ongoing effort aimed at self-improvement, I recently signed up for a goal-setting and time-management course — and arrived 10 minutes late.

It's a 20-minute drive to Okanagan College, but that doesn't include five minutes to park and, in my case, 10 more to finally find the right room.

Boots busily clacking the concrete floor, purse swinging from my arm, my computer bag banging against my backside, I arrived, flustered and mildly embarrassed.

"Hello! Clearly I am in the right place," I announced, "because apparently I need some serious help with time management."

My husband calls me chronologically challenged — and he's right. While it may be kind of funny, my friends, it's not fun. It's inconsiderate and leads to unnecessary stress and that is not healthy.

Greg Savage, founder of Firebrand, a creative staffing agency Down Under, pulls no punches when it comes to punctuality.

"No, you were not running late," he says, "you are rude and selfish."

Savage suggests it is not old-fashioned to expect people to be on time. It is basic good manners and respect for others.

Everyone's busy, he contends, so don't hand him that excuse, but as the founder of four incredibly successful businesses, this guy has attended a lot of meetings (and dinner parties), neither of which are out of bounds for the tardy terrible among us.

Bemoaning the trend toward arriving to meetings 10 or even 20 minutes late, he calculates the stragglers — who smile warmly at the waiting group as they unwrap their bacon sandwiches and finally settle in — waste 200 hours of billable time, if you multiply 10 people kept waiting times 20 minutes.

If a meeting is set to start at 9 a.m., Savage says people tend to drift in at 9:10 or even 9:20 or later — as though any number with a nine in front of it will do.

Savage isn't satisfied when we

OK Sat Apr 30



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use technology to soften our late arrival either — you know, that lame-o text, "Be there in 10."

Not cool, he says.

You're still late, and that's still inconsiderate.

Thankfully Diana DeLonzor, the popular but sadly deceased author of *Never Be Late Again*, wrote while it is rude to be late, it doesn't necessarily make you inconsiderate or a bad person.

Years of research and hundreds of interviews later, she discovered the vast majority of late arrivers are as crazed by their own tardiness as their colleagues.

"Telling a chronic late person to be on time is like telling a dieter, 'Don't eat so much,'" she said.

"Lateniks," as DeLonzor called us, have many traits in common, starting with an inability to estimate time.

When asked to stop reading a book after 90 seconds, early birds almost always put theirs down before time was up, but late folks almost always put their books down well after the timer has stopped.

A 1990s study DeLonzor did for San Francisco State University found chronic lateness and certain personality characteristics are linked. Late people tend to be anxious, with low self control, and a tendency toward thrill seeking.

Deadliners — I think that's me, as I pen this column the day before it's due — are subconsciously drawn to the adrenaline rush of the sprint to the finish line, but that can backfire.

When delays prevent us from completion, we beat ourselves up. Or if the job isn't done as well

because we rushed, we feel badly or, as in my case, we can't sleep thanks to the stress hanging over our heads.

Overscheduled people are often late — yikes, I think this is also me, since apparently we do fall into more than one category.

This is the gal who thinks she can work, then hit the gym and the grocery store on the way home, stopping for a coffee with friends while her raw chicken cooks in the car instead of in the oven at home — where it's her turn to make dinner.

The squirrels or absent-minded professors are so easily distracted they have a hard time travelling a straight line from A to B.

Then there are the people who make themselves feel important by keeping people waiting (now that is rude) while still others never accept they have a problem, always blaming their lateness on external forces like traffic.

So how to fix the tardy tendency?

One of the best tips I learned from my course is to estimate how long something will take you and add 50 per cent. Not only does this ensure you will likely be on time, it will reduce your to-do list — as obviously there are only so many hours in the day. A better sense of control will result, and maybe even some downtime.

If you see waiting around as a waste — what would you do with all that time if you were five minutes early? Try bringing a novel in your bag and taking a good look at your life. Relax and breathe, grateful for the gift of time and happy knowing you've practised consideration.

Finally, like with any good plan, time management needs to include contingency. It might only be a 20-minute drive, but you never know when you might get rerouted, need to stop to help someone or just hit every red light.

To get the green light on all kinds of life skills, check out Okanagan College courses at okanagan.bc.ca/cs.

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