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THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

One last thing

The chronically late may get lots done, but they lose people's respect in the process

November 18, 2008

MARY K. NOLAN
THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR
(Nov 18, 2008)

This story was due weeks ago. It was supposed to run in conjunction with the change from daylight time.

But that didn't happen.

The story didn't get done in time, like so many other things in the life of the writer who was two days late arriving on the planet and has been late for everything ever since. Minutes late, sometimes. Many minutes late, usually. Hours, days and sometimes weeks late, as now.

If misery loves company, there is some comfort in knowing that chronic lateness is a universal curse, one suffered by actor Robert Redford, 19th-century painter James Whistler, singer Mariah Carey, former U.S. president Bill Clinton and an estimated 15 to 20 per cent of the world's population.

The cost to the economy in the United States alone is about \$3 billion a year in lost hours. The personal cost is high, too -- ranging from diminished self-respect to constantly elevated stress levels to catastrophic events such as job loss and life-threatening accidents caused by hurrying.

"Late people are typically late all their lives," says Diana DeLonzor, a San Francisco business consultant who specializes in the causes, consequences and cures of chronic lateness.

"They can rally for something they really want to do -- a vacation or a job they really want -- they'll be on time. But it's like the bride who loses weight for the wedding: it all comes back within six months."

DeLonzor knows. She was one of them, chronically late for everything, until her 30s when she made a New Year's resolution never to be late again. Her husband suggested she get up 15 minutes earlier every day but didn't understand that as a chronically late person she could get up three hours earlier and still be late for work.

With determination and self-discipline, she succeeded, turning a bad habit into a career as a time-management specialist, public speaker and author of *Never Be Late Again: 7 Cures for the Punctually Challenged* (Post Madison, \$13.95). It took her several months -- "with relapses" -- to change her ways.

As with overeating or any other bad habit, there are many deeply ingrained reasons for chronic lateness. DeLonzor believes they are not only psychological but partly physiological, whether genetically rooted or caused by faulty wiring in the brain that leads to skewed perceptions of time.

"That's good news," she says. "When you realized there is a physiological component to it, the burden lifts and you don't have to beat yourself up anymore. The bad news is it's going to be harder for you to change your habits and overcome it."

Debbie Mandel, a stress-management specialist in Long Island, N.Y., has her own theory on why some people are always late:

"They're stress junkies," she says. "Addicted to stress. They have got the big to-do list, they say, 'I'm ready ahead of time, but I'm not going to leave now, I'll start something else.' The stress junkie lives in the future and needs to get stressed to focus."

"We brag about it. We drive ourselves and find empowerment by saying, 'Look how much I can do.'"

Mandel says there's a rush that comes with that feeling of being oh-so-busy and important, but with the highs of every addiction comes the crash-and-burn phase.

"Then there's this floating uneasiness, you're tired, full of aches and pains, with disappointment nagging at you, and it's so ubiquitous, you don't even realize it," says Mandel. That's when health problems start to develop.


Harold Taylor, who believes being late is the ultimate sign of disrespect for others, blames "one last thing syndrome."


"If 'one last thing' took two or three minutes, that would be fine," says the man behind Harold Taylor Time Consultants Ltd. in Dunville. "But it never does."




Two A personalities are more prone to lateness because they are always in motion, says Taylor, who


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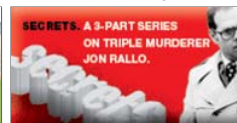
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