

# **Might as well face it, you're addicted to late.**

By Bill Daniels

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I was sitting in a church pew at Old St. Mary's in San Francisco this past Saturday with my wife and two children, looking around for the rest of my family. It was 12:55, the wedding started at one and not one of my four brothers and sisters, nor their children nor my parents were anywhere to be seen.

"I can't believe it," I whispered to my wife. "They're going to be late." She laughed under her breath. "Oh course they're going to be late," she whispered back. "Your parents are always late and anyone traveling with them is going to get sucked into that vortex."

I knew she was right. Growing up, we were always late for services, not just most of the time, all of the time. My mother blamed it on having to get five children ready, but my wife pooh-poohs that notion. "If you're always ten minutes late, then just start getting ready ten minutes earlier," she says, as if that were the easiest thing in the world.

One of my brothers filled the pew with his brood right, as they say, at the wire. "Where are the folks?" I asked him, though I already knew the answer. "They're just running a little behind," he said.

I could hear my wife chuckling.

We all know the practitioner who is addicted to late. We notice the little signs. The anxious attorney peering over their assistant's shoulder as if a steady glare can make fingers type that final draft just a little faster. Malevolent cursing at the copy machine when some paper jams at a critical inopportune moment. The attorney service driver hanging around in the reception area, waiting to make a mad dash for the filing window.

I remember in my law clerk days on mid-Wilshire there was a lawyer who seemed creatively limited only in the ways in which he could test the deadline fates. I remember one breathless water cooler tale about how he and his associate packed into a sedan at the eleventh and one half hour, blasted through Koreatown traffic, hit a movie shoot diversion that shaved a precious minute off his razor-thin timeline, leaving him begging through a closed door for some disinterested filing clerk to please take the summary judgment opposition.

That's how I learned about doing an ex parte application to ask for relief when a filing doesn't make it, so to speak, to the church on time,.

I recall the prominent trial lawyer at the Stanley Mosk courthouse who I ran into during the first

phase of his bifurcated trial. He related how his office had filed a complaint on the final minute of the last day and then somehow, the filing got lost. The first phase of the trial was just to find out if his case was barred by the statute of limitations. Not a great way to introduce a jury to your tricky causation p.i. claim.

I think the introduction at [www.procrastinators-anonymous.org](http://www.procrastinators-anonymous.org) says it brilliantly:

Not a Laughing Matter!

The jokes about procrastination infuriate me. This is not a funny problem - not if you are suffering from true, chronic procrastination. Lawyers have been disbarred due to procrastination. Small business owners have lost their businesses due to procrastination. People's lives fall apart and are destroyed due to procrastination. This is not a funny problem.

So, if you fit the chronic procrastinator profile, just what can you do?

Probably the most important thing is to recognize you have a habit that needs dealing with. Procrastination, the experts say, has various and sundry causes such as fear of failure, fear of success, distracting work environment or just simply too much to do and not enough time.

Coming from a chronically procrastinating clan, I've had to train myself over the years to get ahead of the curve in my work, with what I believe is reasonable success (just don't ask Cindy Cantu about my column deadline habits). My particular path to redemption included several near death experiences, a senior partner who is chronically early, an able assistant who hates doing work right on deadline and a supportive spouse who will kick my @\$ when necessity requires.

So, examine your workload, reflect and remember that , as the Chinese love to remind us, a journey of a thousand miles always begins with a single step,. Take it from a recovering procrastinator, there is boundless joy, as well as much lower anxiety, in getting ahead of the curve.

Just don't keep putting off looking for a cure to what ails you. Oh, and for the record, I am filing this column on the day it is due. First time in months, but I'll still take the win, thank you very much.

Some useful tips from [www.johnplaceonline.com](http://www.johnplaceonline.com):

You're looking for the sweet spot between procrastination and frenzy, the magic pace at which the assembly line of your life runs smoothly.

Here are 11 common causes of procrastination and corresponding tips to help you find the pace

you're looking for:

- **Complicated-task anxiety:** Break big, complicated tasks into smaller pieces. Complete a starter task, no matter how small.
- **Fear of imperfection:** Accept that perfection is rarely attainable and seldom necessary. You're a person, not a robot. Use the 80/20 rule whenever appropriate.
- **Indecision:** Determine your decision-making criteria, then set a deadline for your decision. Ask a friend to hold you accountable.
- **Priority confusion:** Distinguish obligations from options. What are you really responsible for? List and prioritize tasks.
- **Boredom from minutiae:** Automate simple repetitive tasks whenever possible.
- **Lack of focus:** Minimize distractions. Check e-mail and voicemail only twice per day instead of every 5 minutes. Find a quiet room where you can concentrate. Resist the urge to keep taking breaks.
- **Poor organizational skills:** Clean your work area. Put tools and utensils in their proper place so you can find them when you need them.
- **Laziness:** Remind yourself of the consequences of procrastination. Resist the urge to be a couch potato. Try to complete several small tasks to provide a feeling of accomplishment. Reward yourself.
- **Lack of energy:** Maintain a regular sleep routine. Eat healthy. Exercise regularly. Do not skip breakfast.
- **Early morning lag:** Before you stop working each day, make a list of the tasks you want to begin first thing the following morning so you can hit the ground running the next day.
- **Post-lunch fatigue:** Before leaving for lunch, make a list of the things you plan to do when you get back so you can pick up where you left off. Avoid eating a heavy lunch.

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**For additional reading and learning:**

[Checklists, Reading Lists and Connecting the Dots](#), Connect the dots from planning to success.

[Sun Tzu, Lao Tsu; Using Yin & Yang To Help Make Your Cases Stronger.](#) Talking about practical principles here and what yin and yang teach us when working your cases.

These previous and other articles/videos can be found in the Learning Center section of [www.BillDanielsLaw.com](http://www.BillDanielsLaw.com)

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