

Punctuality

"I'm late; I'm late, for a very important date!"

I think we all can remember this phrase from "Alice in Wonderland." The White Rabbit is scurrying along, shirt tails flying behind him, holding a big pocket watch as he dashed off down the rabbit hole. That scene is at the beginning of the story and a paramount part, as Alice follows him down the rabbit hole.

People have speculated that he was late for the announcement of the Queen to the Royal Garden and feared he would lose his head. Another phrase often quoted from this story "Off with his head."

I am quoting the story Alice in Wonderland because it is a great metaphor for my article. At one time or another, I am sure we have all been the White Rabbit, scurrying to make an appointment or we have been the Queen of Hearts, left waiting and wanting to shout "off with their heads!"

Being late occasionally should not set off any alarm bells however, if you are habitually late, you may need to look deeper to see what is going on. It is easy to make excuses for our behavior or project responsibility onto others. For true growth, though, we need to take responsibility and accept why we are late, come to terms with it, and work on correcting it.

Being late can seem like a small thing that doesn't matter, but it communicates a message (even unintentionally) to the person waiting that speaks volumes. In essence, it conveys, "my time is more valuable than yours."

Recently I was on the receiving end of waiting for someone. It irritated me, and I decided I should revisit these words I had written and expand upon them. Throughout our day to day life we are often called upon to reexamine lessons that we have processed. I liken it to peeling a layer of the onion, going deeper into the core. Then I think... I am not a big fan of onions; maybe it should be a jawbreaker. Not that I like jawbreakers particularly, but they are sweeter than onions. I do believe in processing what comes to me, of discovering more about myself through the "sweet" and "sour" moments of my life.

Being kept waiting is an experience no one enjoys, at best it wastes time, and at worst it indicates a lack of regard. Sure, the person kept waiting is polite and accepts the apologies offered by the late arrival, even if they are seething inside and indeed would love to yell "off with his head."

At some places, if you are late for your appointment, you lose out and have to rebook. Or worse, you have to pay for the appointment you missed and rebook, which ends up costing you double.

Some of the main reasons we get into the habit of being late are:

Lack of self-regard; we aren't important anyway, so why will anyone care if we're late, or don't show up at all.

Being disorganized, or simply trying to do too much in one day.

Not wanting to do it really or be there; We communicate our disinterest or boredom by not showing up on time.

There is freedom to be gained in taking back your power and addressing the subject of being late! One, you will save time by not running around like the White Rabbit stressing because you are going to be late. Plan ahead and remember most things take longer to do than you think.

Remember first and foremost; you are important, or the other person would not have set up an appointment with you! Start showing up on time and your self-regard will receive a boost because those who are expecting you will be appreciative. What you put out comes back to you.

If you don't want to be at a function or just don't feel like doing something for whatever reason, communicate this. It might work out that you don't have to participate. Again, you will be saving yourself the stress of dragging your feet in procrastination, or being bored during the time spent there.

Understanding the deeper meaning of our inability to show up on time allows us the option to communicate clearly and consciously how we feel instead of communicating unconsciously by being late.

I have not addressed the Queen of Hearts factor in the lateness game. For those of you who are habitually waiting for others, there are a couple of things you can do.

Address the issue with the person in a non-confrontational way. Let them know that your time is valuable to you.

Set boundaries, even if this means leaving when they don't show up or excluding them from the event. You might feel guilty about this, but in the end, you will have taken your power back and will not be held hostage by their timeframe.

My most recent experience was with a professional. I did address that I was not pleased to be kept waiting without the courtesy of being told the professional was running behind. At the very least I should have been informed, so that I could decide how to spend the waiting time.

Apologies were made, but somehow it did not reach my inner jawbreaker until much later. First thought was, how many were late ahead of my appointment? I am sure that someone earlier in the day was late, and that set the whole booking schedule behind. I had many irons in the fire and having to wait 30 minutes added to my already loaded schedule. However, I needed to understand that sometimes life just slows you down, so you take a break. Eventually all that needs to be done is completed, even with taking a breather.

What do you think? Are you the White Rabbit, the Queen of Hearts or a little of both? Discern your truth with regards to punctuality. Decide to work openly on it and set yourself free!

Namaste

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