

Procrastination now being viewed as an art form

When I quit this mortal coil, the words of Frederick Oliver will serve as my epitaph - "If a thing's worth doing, it's worth doing late."

Imagine my joy when I read that procrastination, which has become something of an art form for yours truly, is now being studied by psychologists. This means that, before long, it will be classified as a type of mental illness and therefore Not My Fault.

Already the experts are lining up to define what it is and why some of us indulge in it. While non-psychologists such as myself may be tempted to blame sloth for the problem, we are more than willing to accept a kinder, gentler explanation for our shortcomings.



Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

An article in the Globe and Mail, entitled "Are you going to put off reading this?" has been a source of inspiration. I actually finished it along with the knowledge that the deadline for this column is looming like the iceberg which caused the untimely demise of the Titanic.

According to assistant professor of psychology Joseph Ferrari, telling a chronic procrastinator to get something done "is like saying

to a clinically depressed person, cheer up." Thanks to this splendid visionary, I am no longer a hopeless case, but a victim of circumstances beyond my control.

I suggest the term Chronic Lateness Disorder, or CLD, be used to describe the syndrome. In certain circumstances, people identified as CLD survivors should be eligible for large cash settlements in the event of being fired for incompetence.

Take, for example, those who have been dismissed because they spent their working hours in a pursuit entirely unrelated to their job, but of much greater personal interest to them.

Surely any psychologist worth

his or her salt would recognize that avoidance is a major symptom of CLD and thus grounds for appealing such hard-hearted logic.

Naturally there would have to be some sort of means test, which, judging by the teetering piles of stuff in my in-tray, I could pass with flying colours.

And the language would have to be purged of the word procrastinator, with its connotations of laziness and lack of moral fibre. In my view, "temporarily challenged" fits in nicely with the current tendency to call a spade a wooden-handled gardening implement.

The next step would be to make those newly diagnosed with CLD known to fel-

low members of the temporally challenged community, although this seems an insurmountable task, given our propensity for failing to finish what we start.

One thing is certain, there would be no committees, since none of us would ever get around to arranging a meeting, let alone showing up for it or deciding who should be responsible for what.

Among the suggested cures is behavioral therapy "in which a person learns to overcome procrastination by rewarding herself after getting some of the task done, or penalizing herself for not starting it."

Forget finishing this. I'm off to ingest a slice of triple fudge chocolate cheesecake as my reward for starting it.

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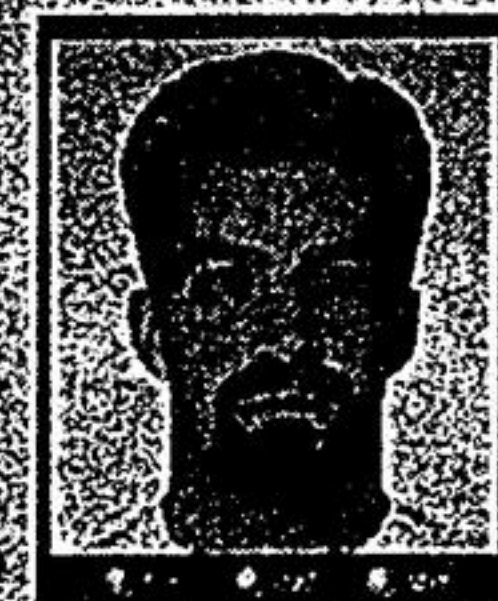
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