

Being on Time is the New Fashionably Late.

By Nancy Dinerstein

Time is What We Want
Most, but use...worst."

-William Penn, Founder of Pennsylvania

With 2009 upon us, we will grab a notepad and scrawl out our New Year's Resolutions. We may scratch off the ones that seem unmanageable, and keep the ones within reach. We vow to do better.

Some of us will jot down a New Year's resolution about time. We never seem to have enough of it, and running late has become a lifestyle. We eat breakfast in the car and apply mascara at red lights. When our friends invite us to lunch at noon, we arrive at 12:30. But this year, things will be different, we promise.

Alas, we remain chronically late. It's not our fault, we say. We apologize with tangible excuses that time-management experts refer to as "technical difficulties." Traffic, lost keys, or personal emergencies become our alibis. And we report a multitude of "symptoms" such as being easily sidetracked, having trouble focusing, or suffering from attention deficit disorder.

However, "chronic lateness" is not a disorder in itself. Researchers have yet to discover a "lateness gene" in their genetic analysis. Habitual lateness is a behavioral problem that may be linked to our broad psychological makeup.

Psychological science researchers explain that being late is a control issue where a person asserts dominance and shows defiance by never being on time. People who are late are

subconsciously saying they are "extremely busy and therefore important." A "lateness power struggle" ensues. When a person is late to a business meeting, they may promote the idea that "they're the most important person in the room and thus their lateness is excused."

In other situations, being late is a form of procrastination and anxiety. A person who is late may feel anxious about being the first guest to arrive at an event, and their lateness signals insecurity.

Research studies reveal that people who are on time, or even early, communicate reliability and competence. They also report feeling more relaxed and prepared, as opposed to hurried and disheveled.

But can timelines affect our overall longevity?

Studies by Psychologists at the University of Illinois show the cluster of personality traits comprising conscientiousness - orderliness, industry, reliability and yes, timeliness - not only increase over the entire lifespan, but are directly related to improved health and longevity.

According to scientist, Brent Roberts: "First, conscientious people create life paths for themselves that contribute to better health. That is, they are more successful in their careers, earn more money, have more stable families, and socialize more—all factors known to be linked to health."

So, when you're writing out your list of New Year's Resolutions, make punctuality a conscious priority. Isn't it about time? **H**

