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5 Minutes Early Is On Time; On Time Is Late; Late Is Unacceptable

I have a magic pill to sell you. It will help you make more money, be happier, look thinner, and have better relationships. It's a revolutionary new pharmaceutical product called Late-No-More. Just one dose every day will allow you to show up on time, greatly enhancing your life and the lives of those around you.

All joking aside, being late is unacceptable. While that sounds harsh, it's the truth and something that should be said more often. I don't care if you're attending a dinner party, a conference call, or a coffee meeting – your punctuality says a lot about you.

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Being late bothers me so much that just thinking about it makes me queasy. My being late, which does occasionally happen, usually causes me to break out into a nervous sweat. The later I am, the more it looks like I've sprung a leak. Catch me more than 15 minutes late and it looks like I went swimming.

On this issue, I find myself a member of a tiny minority. It seems like most people consider a meeting time or deadline to be merely a mild advisory of something that might happen. I've been called uptight and unreasonable, or variations prefaced with expletives. In a world that feels perpetually late, raising the issue of punctuality isn't a way to win popularity contests and I'm ok with that.

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There's a reason we set meeting times and deadlines. It allows for a coordination of efforts, minimizes time/effort waste, and helps set expectations. Think of how much would get done if everyone just "chilled out" and "went with the flow?" It would be the definition of inefficiency. It's probably not that hard to imagine, considering just last week I had 13 (yes, I counted) different people blow meeting times, or miss deadlines. It feels like a raging epidemic, seemingly smoothed over by a barrage of "my bads," "sorry, mans," and "you know how it goes." The desired response is "it's all good," but the reality is that it's not okay. Here's what it is.

- **Disrespectful:** Being on time is about respect. It signals that you value and appreciate the other person. If you don't respect the meeting's participants, why are you meeting with them in the first place?
- **Inconsiderate:** Unintentionally being late demonstrates an overall lack of consideration for the lives of others. You just don't care.
- **Big-Timing:** Intentionally being late is about power. It's showing the other person, or people that you're a "big deal" and have the upper-hand in the relationship. It's also called being a dick.
- **Incredible:** No, not in the good way. When you miss meeting times or deadlines, your credibility takes the trajectory of a lead balloon. If you can't be counted on to be on time, how could you possibly have credibility around far tougher tasks?
- **Unprofitable:** Let's consider a scenario where five people are holding a meeting at 2 p.m. Your sauntering in ten minutes late just wasted 40 minutes of other peoples' time. Let's say the organization bills \$200/hour. Are you paying the \$133 bill? Someone certainly is.
- **Disorganized:** If you can't keep your calendar, what other parts of your life are teetering on the edge of complete disaster? Being late signals at best that you're barely hanging on and probably not someone I want to associate with.
- **Overly-Busy:** Everyone likes to equate busyness with importance, but the truly successful know that's BS. Having a perpetually hectic schedule just signals that you can't prioritize, or say "no," neither of which is an endearing trait.
- **Flaky:** Apparently some people just "flake out," which seems to mean that they arbitrarily decided not to

do the thing they committed to at the very last minute. Seriously? That's ridiculous.

- **Megalomaniacal:** While most grow out of this by the age of eight, some genuinely believe they are the center of the universe. It's not attractive. Note, this is also called [Donald Trump Syndrome](#). Do you want to be compared to Donald Trump?

As I said earlier, I'm occasionally late. Sometimes a true emergency happens, or an outlier event transpires. When it happens, I try to give a very detailed account of why I was late, apologize profusely, make sure the other person knows that I take it very seriously, and assure them it won't happen again.

Paying attention to punctuality is not about being "judgy," or stressed. In fact, it's quite the opposite. It makes room for the caring, considerate, thoughtful people I want in my life, whether that's friends or colleagues. Think of how relaxing your life would be if everyone just did what they said they'd do, when they said they'd do it? A good place to start is with yourself and a great motto is something I was taught as a child:

“*5 minutes early is on time. On time is late. Late is unacceptable.*”

Brent Beshore is the founder and CEO of [adventur.es](#). Connect with him on [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

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