

WAITING

ATHENAEUM SOCIETY

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By Bob Cope

PLAY MUSIC: "WAITING ON THE WORLD TO CHANGE" BY JOHN MAYER.

We all spend precious time just waiting. We wait in traffic, grocery store lines, and carpool circles. We wait to grow up, for true love, and for our children to be born. We even wait to die. But while we work hard at this *business of living*, life can sometimes feel like one long, boring meeting. Even today, with instant-gratification at our techno-laced fingertips, we can't escape *the waiting place*. Somehow, in between our texting and tweeting and living and dying, we end up there again and again.

Sometimes our inability to wait has more tragic implications:

- ❖ While waiting to grow up, we forget to embrace our childhoods.
- ❖ While waiting to lose weight, we fail to enjoy the youthfulness of our bodies.
- ❖ While waiting for true love, we forget to relish our freedom. (or worse, we settle for second best.)
- ❖ While waiting to have children, we forget to nurture and enjoy the love and freedom of a childless marriage.
- ❖ While waiting for our children to grow, we forget to notice their beauty as infants, toddlers, children, and teens. We fail to burn the memory of them into our soles.

- ❖ While waiting for a loved one to get well (or to die), we fail to appreciate the days – even those filled with sickness and medications – we have with one another.

From Rudyard Kipling's "IF":

"If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can **wait** and not be tired by waiting...etc.
You'll be a man my son!"

And from a poem titled "Waiting" by Amy Nelligan in memory of her dad (subtitled "If You Are Out There... I'm Done Waiting For You"):

I sit alone in the darkness
Waiting...
Waiting for him to come back to me.
Can he hear my cries?
Can he feel my tears?
Can he sense my breaking heart?
God only knows such a fact.
How can this be that he can't see me?
Is it because I'm sitting alone in the darkness?
I just walk past everyone as if I were invisible.

**Can he see me now?
Can he see the pain he's caused me?
Or does he look past it?
I think I should move on,
But something tells me to wait.
It's my heart.
I'll give him one more chance,
He needs to prove his love to me.
As I return to sit alone in the darkness...
Waiting.**

Waiting can fall into several categories. Those circumstances we have no control over (rules, regulations, etc.), those where we make a choice to wait (in lines at amusement parks, etc.) and chance circumstances (traffic, shopping lines, etc.).

John and Mary have been anxiously awaiting the birth of their first child. They are traditionalists by not desiring to know the sex of the baby, which meant they had to wait until the birth before buying clothes and decorating the nursery...not to mention naming the baby. Now they were making another mad dash to the hospital. The first dash proved to be a false alarm, meaning more waiting. John's nerves were frazzled as he waited and wondered if he remembered what to do in assisting Mary during delivery. Crazy thoughts ran through his mind. If this were a domestic white mouse the wait would only be 19 days; a cat only 64 days; a dog only 61 days. On the other hand if it were an Asian elephant, the wait would be an average of 616 days. I told you these were crazy thoughts. None the less, John and Mary felt lucky having to wait an average of 266 days for the birth of their first child which would be

named either Anthony or Alice. At last, this was the real thing and a healthy Anthony entered the world at 3:04 a.m. on November 7. The waiting was over.

We are all aware of the delays that keep airline passengers waiting.

As Joe Sharkey reported in the New York Times on August 11, 2008 (and there have been more recent episodes), “A big thunderstorm is crashing outside, and my two parrots are worked up downstairs.”

“Bye-bye!” The big Macaw is screaming, using words he says when alarmed.

“It’s raining!” The little African Gray is repeating shrilly.

“I have my own reaction to inclement weather. I check out the airport status maps on www.flightstats.com. And sure enough, as thunderstorms rolled into the northeast on Monday morning, a cluster of red dots covered the New York airports and beyond, indicating that major delays were building up.”

For many passengers, the story is now familiar. Bad weather arrives, and planes sit on tarmacs for long periods of time while passengers fume and wait.

“They taxied us out, and we’ve been sitting on the tarmac ever since,” Jennifer Wilson said by cell phone Monday afternoon from Virgin America flight 224, stuck at Kennedy International Airport. “They start the engines, they move us, and then they kill them.”

When I spoke to Ms. Wilson, who was bound for San Francisco, the plane had already been sitting on the tarmac for four hours beyond its scheduled 9:10 a.m. departure time.

Because the plane was moving on the ground, “they didn’t let us get up to use the bathrooms till after 11,” she said. We could be sitting here for five more hours, who knows?”

Extended waits on the tarmac have become increasingly frequent in the last 18 months as the air traffic system has been pushed to its limits, unable to cope with added traffic and

delays. For background, consult www.flyersrights.com, the web site of the grass-roots coalition that was founded in 2007 by Kate Hanni after thunderstorms kept her plane on the tarmac for nine hours in December 2006.

The coalition pressed for federal legislation to force airlines to provide adequate food, water and information and to allow passengers to get off an idled flight after three hours.

The bathroom issue, incidentally, frequently comes up as planes full of passengers sit for hours waiting to take off.

In another incident, passengers at the gate for US Airways flight 2257 in Charlotte, N.C., were warned that the plane's two toilets were not functioning properly and were advised to use terminal bathrooms before boarding, according to a passenger.

"It was only about an hour and a half flight to Pensacola, so everybody thought, 'oh well, no problem,' " the passenger said.

But that turned into nearly four hours of waiting on the plane before the flight was finally canceled, when the crew had worked past its shift.

Now the federal government is regulating tarmac wait times and other airline conditions. As reported by Alex Seitz-Wald, as of December 21, 2009 the Obama Administration ordered airlines to limit tarmac wait times, and provide food and bathrooms to stuck passengers.

Responding to horror stories of stranded travelers, the Obama administration ordered airlines to allow passengers to disembark from planes that have been stuck on the tarmac for more than three hours. With the move, the Obama Administration is "sending an unequivocal message to airlines that it won't tolerate" excessive delays:

Airlines will be required to provide food and water for passengers within two hours of a plane being delayed on a tarmac, and to maintain operable lavatories. They must also provide passengers with medical attention when necessary.

Between January and June of 2009, airlines stranded passengers on the tarmac for more than three hours, 613 times. One particularly horrendous incident in August brought the issue to national attention. Passengers on a Continental flight from Houston to St. Paul-Minneapolis were forced to stay in a cramped commuter jet overnight with a foul-smelling lavatory after thunderstorms diverted their plane to Rochester, MN and gate crews wouldn't allow them off the plane. The ordeal led to the first-ever government fine of an airline for a tarmac stranding, with the three companies involved being forced to pay \$175,000 for their negligence. Airlines have "strongly opposed a hard time limit on tarmac standings," claiming it will disrupt their operations. But travelers who have experienced lengthy delays will likely be grateful for the new rule.

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced on April 20, 2011 a bulked-up version of the "passenger bill of rights" for consumers traveling by air.

The new set of protections is built on the first version that came out in 2009 and on flyers' concerns since then. Last winter, a blizzard left thousands of passengers stranded on the tarmac at JFK International Airport in New York, some for up to 10 hours, prompting the Department of Transportation to bar domestic flights from lengthy delays on the tarmac.

DOT's new rules extend last year's decision to restrict tarmac delays to include up to four hours for international flights. In April 2010, the DOT issued a new rule allowing passengers to deplane and return to the gate in the event of a three hour or more delay, which has since eliminated nearly all major tarmac delays for domestic flights. Under the revised

conditions, this rule also will apply to international flights delayed four or more hours. During a delay, airlines also will be required to provide water, food, and medical and bathroom access.

Despite the new regulations, this past October, passengers aboard a Jet Blue flight at Hartford, Connecticut's Bradley Airport were in for a nightmarish seven hour wait when the flight was grounded on the tarmac in a snowstorm with little food, water and no toilets. The pilot was begging for assistance from ground support to no avail.

Of course there are times when we are more than happy to wait. That would be before surgery, after anesthesia has been administered. You know what I mean if you have ever been in the dentist's chair and the drilling starts before the effects of the anesthesia have had time to work. Anesthesia may be used to relax you, block pain, make you sleepy or forgetful or make you unconscious for your surgery. Anesthesia can be either local, regional or general. Propofol (Diprivan) produces general anesthesia and has a rapid onset of about 40 seconds, a short waiting period. Other types have longer waiting periods and the type depends on several things. I will leave this to one of our physician members to weigh in on this as a possible paper.

Here is an insight for parents about learning to wait. Adults live in a world of delayed gratification. Our paychecks come days or even weeks after we've done the work. We put in many hours practicing musical instruments or driving golf balls to improve our performance. We wait until the end of a meal to savor dessert, or shun it so that we can lose five pounds by the end of the month.

Investments of time and effort come much harder to young children, many of whom appear to live by the motto, "I want it, and I want it now!" Given the choice between eating one jellybean immediately and getting two jellybeans ten minutes later, many young children find they just can't wait.

The ability to wait for rewards becomes increasingly important as children grow older. School is filled with delays of gratification. To be successful and graduate, many children must learn to forgo time on the baseball field in favor of studying multiplication tables. To get along with friends, they must learn to wait their turn at games and to share their toys.

Psychologists have found that some children—especially boys—who have a lot of trouble waiting are likely to have difficulties in other areas later on. Boys who are impatient tend to be disruptive at home, disliked by their peers, and poor at solving interpersonal problems. It's unclear why girls who are impatient tend not to have the same pattern of problems.

There have been some very interesting laboratory experiments, many conducted by Dr. Walter Mischel at Columbia University, to measure the delay of gratification among young children. A typical experiment involves bringing a child into a room that contains, among other things, a bell. After the child and the experimenter spend some time together, the child is shown a pair of treats or small toys, one of which the child perceives as much better than the other.

The experimenter then explains that she has to leave the room for a few minutes, but that the child can call her back immediately by ringing the bell. The child is told that if he waits for the experimenter to return on her own, he'll get the better treat; if he rings the bell, he'll get the treat he doesn't like as much. (Once the experimenter leaves, she watches the child through a one-way mirror or video camera.)

This experiment and others have found that those young children who are able to delay gratification the longest tended to approach the situation differently than those who rang the bell early and settled for the lesser reward. The children who waited usually distracted

themselves by thinking about things other than the treats. Typically, they found something to play with while they were alone in the room.

Those who rang the bell early tended to focus their thoughts during the waiting period on the reward. In other words, it's easier for a child to wait for a cookie if he plays with a toy than if he simply stares at the cookie jar and thinks about how good the treat will taste.

Those children who came up with strategies to delay gratification in some of Dr. Mischel's studies had some surprising and long-term advantages over those who rang the bell soon after they were left alone. Ten years or more after they were tested, the children who could distract themselves were found to have done better academically and appeared to handle frustration better than their peers.

Although early patients and higher school performance were correlated, it's unclear whether the former causes the latter. Still, it makes intuitive sense that teaching a child better skills at delaying gratification will help him later on.

So what can you do? If you're trying to help your child become more patient and less frustrated, the first place to look is in the mirror. Young children are very sensitive to how their parents delay gratification. If you aren't patient in dealing with your own frustrations, your child will probably act that way, too.

A few of our predecessors have made some famous quotes on waiting:

"Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle" - **Abraham Lincoln**

"He that can have patience, can have what he will" - **Benjamin Franklin**

"All things come to him who waits – provided he knows what he is waiting for" - **Woodrow T. Wilson**

"How much of human life is lost in waiting?" - Ralph Waldo Emerson

In the UK the average life expectancy is 79.5 years old; this is equivalent to 954 months, or 29,037 days, or 696,882 hours. Breaking down how long the average person spends doing stuff in their lifetimes and you get...

On average people spend one third of their lives asleep, which is 318 months taken up just by laying in bed.

Let's say as an average, people spend 20 minutes a day on the toilet; it may not seem much, but over the course of 80 years it sums up to roughly 13 months and 1 week.

The average person throughout their lifetime spends five years *waiting* in lines and queues where roughly six months of that is *waiting* at traffic lights.

We spend time waiting in many ways and many places... waiting for paint to cure between coats (roughly a four hour wait depending on the paint); waiting in lines to pay our respects at funerals (can be hours); waiting in lines for amusement park rides (hours waiting for popular rides); waiting countless hours in a deer stand for the trophy buck; waiting countless hours in a duck blind for the birds to fly over; waiting countless hours in a boat waiting for the fish to bite; waiting in overnight lines for the opportunity to buy the latest iPad, with some people queuing for a week before the doors open; waiting in restroom lines (long wait for men and even longer for women) and concessions at sporting events; waiting at a standstill for construction delays in traffic; waiting for a beautiful sunset; for those of you with military experience, remember the phrase "hurry and wait"?, attributed to having to be at a designated location at least a half hour ahead of time, just so you could wait for your appointed time; waiting for rain delays at baseball games (the August 12, 1990 seven-hour, 23-minute delay in the Chicago White Sox-Texas Rangers game might be the longest in major league baseball

history. (MLB doesn't keep official rain delay records.)); waiting for the ferry from Fisherman's Wharf to Alcatraz (one to two hours depending on arrival at the wharf); waiting for a jury verdict (1-1/2 days for Dr. Conrad Murray and less than four hours for O. J. Simpson); waiting for concrete to cure (about an hour depending on the water content and ambient air temperature); waiting for fermentation/maturation/aging of spirits: wine (most fermentation will take 14 days), beer (ferment 1-1/2 to 2 weeks before bottling and age three to four weeks after bottling), whiskey (Maker's Mark is 5 to 8 years based on decision of the master distiller); waiting for the 10-count for a boxer (should the referee count to ten, then the knocked-down boxer is ruled "knocked out" (whether unconscious or not) and the other boxer is ruled the winner by knockout (KO); waiting for a golf ball to fall into the cup on the green (remember Tiger Woods' chip-in birdie on hole 16 in the 2005 Masters, the ball landing on the green and immediately, slowly tracked to the hole. It got to the lip of the cup and hung for a second – like it wasn't going to go in. Finally, with the Nike logo showing, it dropped into the cup and gave Woods a two-stroke lead. It is probably the first time a golf shot made for an instant commercial for a golf ball manufacturer; Nike had to love it. The rules state that “when any part of the ball overhangs the lip of the hole, the player is allowed enough time to reach the hole *without unreasonable delay* and wait an additional ten seconds to determine whether the ball is at rest.”).

Let's talk about the restaurant experience – you enter a restaurant and the first thing you ask is “how long is the wait” and then are handed a gizmo box (usually black with lights). Then you proceed to wait (sometimes over an hour) until the gizmo box jolts and flashes you indicating that your wait is over. You are escorted to your table by a hostess and told that your waiter/waitress (a man/woman whose job is to serve customers at their tables in a restaurant, i.e. wait on them.) will be with you soon (more waiting). So first you wait for the waiter/waitress to bring you a menu and water; then they wait on you to decide what you are

going to order and then you wait on them to return to your table to take your order. Once they return to your table, you place the order and wait for the waiter/waitress to bring it out of the kitchen, who is also waiting for the chef to prepare the order. When the order is completed, the waiter/waitress brings it to your table, disappears and waits for you to finish eating, while you wait for them to refill your water glass and coffee cup. Once finished with your meal you wait for the waiter/waitress to bring you the check and once dropped off you wait for them to return to pick it up together with your payment. Once they pick it up, you wait for them to return with your change or credit card. Once they return, you are through with the restaurant experience, *unless* you have to wait on the valet service to bring you your car.

Waiting– the symptom of failure

There is also self-imposed waiting. Below is a post that originally appeared on June 20, 2011 from [blogging4jobs](#), a blog by Jessica Miller-Merrell.

“Much of my professional career was spent waiting. Waiting for the right moment, the right time to sit down with my boss or to talk about new responsibilities. I’d wait to discuss my professional goals or career objectives. Waiting till my review. Waiting to start my life.”

In New York City, the cumulative amount of time all working professionals in the city spend in elevators in a twelve month period, spent waiting, is 16.6 years. Imagine 16 years. At my funeral I really don’t want someone saying, “That Jessica. She can ride a mean elevator. Yup, one of the best.”

Silly, huh? So why are you waiting?

When we choose to wait, are we exercising Patience or Procrastination? Jeff Hamilton posted on December 22, 2007:

“It sounds like a classic sports battle, Patience vs. Procrastination. Like Ali vs. Fraser, or the Yankees vs. the Red Sox, or the Maple Leafs vs. The Habs (Montreal Canadians).

Where is the fine line that separates patience and procrastination? At what point do we look at ourselves and ask, “Am I exercising patience or simply procrastinating?”

The difference between Patience vs. Procrastination may be about understanding vs. ego. Patience comes from a place of understanding, as well as thinking. Patience could be defined as waiting for an expected outcome without experiencing anxiety, tension, or frustration. It could also be letting go of your need for immediate gratification (ego stroking).

What are typical reasons why you procrastinate? Here are a few of the most common situations to consider in your anti-procrastination efforts.

It can be as simple as:

Waiting for the right mood

Waiting for the right time

Warning: Standing in line can cause extreme boredom, annoyance and even rage, which is precisely why there is a fascinating science devoted to what makes people tick – and ticked off - when forced to wait.

You may not know it, but the seemingly mundane task of forming a queue at the airport, a fast-food joint or a post-thanksgiving midnight sale is the subject of careful study by experts in the field of queuing psychology.

The findings may not always reduce the wait times, but they can cut frustration and make people feel better, or even happy, about waiting in line, according to Richard Larson, who has researched queuing psychology for more than two decades.

Possibly some of the most beautiful things happen if we are willing to quite our hearts, lean into the waiting place, and listen to what it tells us. When we do, we will often be astonished by what it has to say. Create a beautiful day and life by investing your waiting time in thoughts, things and actions which bring you joy.

I know you are waiting for me to finish...and I will. I anxiously wait for your comments.