

This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

I had a discussion this past weekend with someone about the psychology of deadlines. About how much we need them and the different ways people react to them.

The discussion started because I had received an email recently about a deadline for a somewhat complicated and involved project. On Thursday late afternoon an email reminded me about a report that was due the next day. I had been working on compiling the information but it wasn't finished. Data was available for the report, but not all in one place.

I had totally forgotten the deadline date. Which was disturbing to me.

So I dutifully worked on the report that night. And sent a somewhat frantic email to the person waiting for the report saying I had a few holes that I wouldn't be able to fill for a couple of weeks.

That evening I spent some time beating myself up for not realizing this deadline was looming. It was not a good sign that I let that deadline approach without realizing it.

Early the next morning we received an email saying OOPS, the deadline was actually two weeks from now. Well, that certainly beats the alternative.

Here are my feelings about deadlines.

I need them. I love them—usually. I am very good about meeting them—most of the time.

I have a different project with a deadline of August 30. It's an involved and complicated compilation of statistics as well. I have a love/hate relationship with the regular reminders. I appreciate them. And, they make me nervous. My thought is, if you really wanted it earlier, then set the deadline earlier, but don't nag.

It made me think about the deadlines that I set for other people. If I'm getting antsy at 3 p.m. for a project with a 5 p.m. deadline, maybe I should have set an earlier deadline. It's not late at 3 p.m. It's not late at 4:55 p.m. If I said 5 then I need to be comfortable with that time.

What about missing deadlines? I interned for a mid-size market television news room during college and loved the pressure of deadlines. In that setting you made the deadline, period.

It's disrespectful to other people involved in a project not to meet a hard deadline. And I've missed a few. Sometimes I have a mental block with a project. I find that to be true with the monthly newsletters I write for the Chamber. There always seems to be one month every year or so when I just can't get started—or finish-- in a timely manner. The item moves to the bottom of my to-do list every day and then to the top of the next days' list. Only to be the last task to even get started. If it gets started.

I guess I fall into the category of—"I do my best work when I wait to the last minute to do it." That can't be true, but it feels like it.

And yet it feels great to finish something ahead of a deadline! Why don't I do that every time?

This has been Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce.

