

Volitional Psychology with Dr. Joseph R. Ferrari

Ologies Podcast

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Oh hey, it's your neighbor's cat who hangs out by the mailboxes, and who should *definitely* be inside but is also very convincing when she asks for belly rubs, Alie Ward, back with the MOST exciting episode of Ologies ever made (if you ask my subconscious brain, and my thirsty heart, which you didn't, and I don't care). This episode is about procrastination. It's not possible for me to be more ready for it. But before we dive in, I'm gonna take a minute to let you know that there are some live things happening soon. Thursday, March 5th I will be at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. I'll be leading their Women in Science panel. And then the next night, March 6th, I'll be back in LA for the Natural History Museum's First Fridays series, I'll be leading two chats called *Secrets from the Vaults*. And THEN I'll be at SXSW EDU in Austin giving a talk on March 11th. So if you want tickets for those, links are in the show notes, come say hi!

Also, thank you to everyone on Patreon who supports the show and sends in their questions. Thanks to everyone wearing gear from OlogiesMerch.com. There are t-shirts, and sweatshirts, and hats, and socks. And thank you to everyone who's ever hit the 5 stars in iTunes, or subscribed on all the platforms, and of course who leaves reviews for me to just cradle in my palms like a baby bird. And each week I read you a newly hatched one, such as, Kcmullins13 says:

I absolutely love it. The journalist in me loves the li'l asides where you explain/fact check something, and everything else in me loves everything else. Just lovely.

Well, I think you're lovely, Kcmullins, so deal with that!

Okay, procrastinology... euuuugbalufiuldjmwlet's get into it. Procrastinology: not a real word in the academic sense. Bummer. But procrastination has such a beautiful back story. So, *pro* means 'forward' and *crastinus* means 'til next day'. So to procrastinate, in Latin, means to 'forward things until tomorrow'. Eugh! AAH! It's like doing a chef's kiss while you're getting gut punched. Gorgeous.

Volitional Psychology comes from 'volition,' which means intentional behavior, and that comes from the Latin meaning 'to wish'. This was a topic I could not explore soon enough. As a people-pleasing hooman with a brain full of bees, I have the dirty secret of being a chronic procrastinator. Like, the higher the stakes on something, the more terrified I am of starting it. If there are official Government forms, I can't even look at 'em. I can't look at them until the day they're due. Like, big writing projects... I would rather clean a litterbox belonging to an elderly tiger. Once, while procrastinating, I googled procrastination, and then I found out about a conference in Chicago, run by the topic's most prominent research psychologist and a professor of General and Community Psychology at Chicago's DePaul University.

This Ologist got his Bachelor's in Psychology, two Masters' in Experimental and General Psychology, a PhD in Psychology. His list of published papers on the topic of procrastination is *exhaustive*. It is exhausting to fathom. This is The Dude when it comes to the science of procrastination. So I reached out, he said yes! He would be interviewed. BUT, but, if I made light of the suffering felt by chronic procrastinators, he would pull an Adam Driver on *Fresh Air* and he would walk right out of the

studio. And I assured him I have the utmost compassion, and also the ulterior motive of wanting to fix my own life, and he said, “oh, okay, great then.”

And so we met up in a community radio station in a Chicago suburb (shout out to Elise at EyeScream Media in Lisle). He was neatly dressed in a cashmere sweater, and has a distinguished mustache, kind of like you would expect to find on a Fire Chief. Now, time was ticking. We spoke as fast as we could and answered as many questions as we could possibly fit into this window. I had bought his book, *Still Procrastinating? The No Regrets Guide to Getting It Done*, which explains that everyone procrastinates, but not everyone is a procrastinator. So, who does what? And I prepared a list of questions that was mostly just an airplane napkin scrawled with the words: “Whyyyyyy?” And [*pleadingly*] “How stop?” So we address both.

So, let’s get this episode in your brains, ‘cause no matter what your relationship to procrastination, this episode will change the way you look at yourself, and your to-do list. Without further ado, absorb the wit and the wisdom of author, scientist, psychologist, and procrastination research legend, Volitional Psychologist, the Dr. Joseph R. Ferrari.

Dr. Joseph R. Ferrari: Ferrari is F E R R A R I, like the car.

Alie Ward: Okay, gotcha! You must have said that so many times in your life.

Dr. F: Many times. But you know it means “smith”?

Alie: Does it really?

Dr. F: It means the blacksmith. The ironmaker. *Ferros* is Latin for iron, and so Ferrari, Ferraro, Ferrara... it’s like smith. It’s nothing exotic.

Alie: Really! Ooooooh, there you go! I had no idea.

Aside: Okay, so you know Ferrari’s rearing horse logo? I always thought that meant, “look how fast our cars go! Like a really fast horse.” But then I was like, “oh, maybe it’s like a farrier, like a blacksmith that does horseshoes.” And I just looked it up, and Enzo Ferrari just borrowed the image of the prancing horse from a World War II fighter pilot’s plane for good luck. Oh my God.

Let’s get back to procrastination, I am so sorry. So, who procrastinates? What’s the deal?

Dr. F: So, they will not listen to anything that I say as to how to treat it. Because there’s always a reason. These aren’t stupid people, they’re very smart. Let me know when you’re ready to start. Or you’ve started recording already?

Alie: Yes. Yeah, we’re already recording. So, Dr. Joseph Ferrari... you’re a psychologist

Dr. F: Yes, I am.

Alie: Is there a particular field of psychology that deals with procrastination?

Dr. F: I’m trained as a social personality psychologist. That means a research psychologist. There are also clinical psychologists and counselling psychologists that have dealt with this topic

of procrastination. But we're getting a little ahead, if I may. Okay, because everybody procrastinates, but not everyone is a procrastinator.

Alie: I was going to ask if you have that tattooed anywhere on your body. *[laughs]*

Dr. F: No. *[lightheartedly]* That's my quote that people have stolen, and it's not right. Now, what does that mean, how can you be...? What the data shows is that 20% of adult men and women are chronic procrastinators. What does *that* mean? They do it at home, they do it at school, they do it at work, relationships. You know they're going to show up late for events, they're not going to RSVP on time, they're never going to get that concert ticket or sporting ticket because they never got around to purchase the ticket. *[Alie groans in agreement]* They miss doctor's appointments, they wait until the gauge goes on E before they get more gas, they wait for the third bill. TWENTY PERCENT.

Now, you might say, "That's all? I know people that are... it's higher." Bah! That's higher than depression, higher than phobia, higher than alcoholism, higher than panic attacks. Higher than substance abuse. And yet, this is considered a funny topic. Procrastination is considered a non-serious disorder. I have had people get angry at me when they say, "May is Mental Health Month" and I say, "Yes, and make sure we put in procrastination." And they say, "Oh, you're trivializing our other illnesses." No! This is more common than many of those other issues, and yet people consider this a frivolous topic. Twenty percent of adults!

Aside: Okay, we're getting right into it. Dr. Ferrari says, according to his studies, and there are many, that figure tracks across all genders and nations. 20% of folks are chronic procrastinators, and if you're listening to this, you either are one, you know one, maybe someone sent you a link to this episode, because working up to the last minute isn't cute anymore. Now, college students; 70-75% of you procrastinate on assignments, but you do it less as you get older, which brings us back to Dr. Ferrari's motto.

Dr. F: Everyone procrastinates, but not everyone's a procrastinator. So, everybody might put off a task, the college student might delay reading, studying, registering for a class, seeing their mentor. But if Lizzo... is that her name? Lizzo? *[Alie assists: "Lizzo!" And they laugh]* If Lizzo gives a free concert to the first 50 people, they're there. If there's a keg of beer for free in the dorm, they're there. Well then, they're not procrastinators. They procrastinate, but they're not procrastinators. So, it's very important for listeners, to people that do the research, that know that there's a difference between academic procrastination and global, everyday procrastination, or what I call chronic procrastination. They're two different animals.

Every 2 years there's an international meeting on the study of procrastination. It was just held this past Summer in Sheffield, England. And in 2017 I hosted it here in Chicago, that was the 10th biannual. So, for over 20 years, scholars have been getting together. What's interesting is that I'm pretty much the only US person; a lot in Canada, a lot in Europe, now it's growing in Asia and other areas, but in the US, this topic is not considered a serious scientific topic. Why? I don't know.

And every time we do these meetings, we seem to go back (because there are always new people coming to these meetings) to the notion of "what's the difference between pondering

and waiting, and delay and dwelling, and postponing and procrastination?" Pausing, waiting, daw... dwad... being... I can't say the word. [*Alie assists: "dawdling?"*] Dawdling! That's the word. I want you to cut that out! [*Alie laughs*]

Aside: He was kiddiinggggg... I would NOT do him dirty like that. Anyway.

Dr. F: Pausing, waiting... are all forms of delaying, but they're not the same as procrastination. The continuum goes worse. The question is, what's the tipping point? Ah, we don't know. But we should not consider delaying itself as the same. It's not that these people are lazy; chronic procrastinators are very hardworking. That's something else, that's something they shouldn't be doing. They're postponing what they're supposed to do for something else. And they've got good reasons! They'll tell you, [*mimicking someone speaking excuses:*] "ohh, ner ner, this and that..." They're very smart, to keep coming up with plausible, believable reasons, and so you listen to them, and you go, "Oh, oh, well okay. That's why you can't do it now." And then next time, "OH, that's why!" and then, "OH! THAT'S why!" It's never taking ownership.

Aside: And as someone who struggles with this, I can say, each of these excuses feels VERY REAL to the procrastinator. So, it's not that we're lying to *you*, it's just that we're lying to *ourselves*, perhaps. And Dr. Ferrari says that there's a tipping point between pondering and delaying, and true chronic procrastination. That tipping point, I find, is usually my face tipping into a keyboard at 4 AM the night before something is due.

Dr. F: Pondering is a more cognitive variable, or it's like thinking. Indecision, being indecisive, is what we call in the field 'decisional procrastination'. So I break them out as sort of separate, and again, there's a difference. What do you do if you have a person who is indecisive? Well, first thing to do, and I know you want to talk about treatment later, is that you don't take them to a place where they have lots of options.

Alie: Haha! Ikea is a nightmare!

Dr. F: Yes, out here in the Western Suburbs of Chicago, there's a movie theatre in Aurora that has *31 movies!* You don't take the indecisive to 31 movies. Why? Because you stand there, and you say, "So what do you want to see?" And what do they say?

Alie: [*laughing*] I don't know, what do you want to see?

Dr. F: And you go, "Aahhhh, I don't know, what do YOU want to see?" And what do they say?

Alie: "Uhhh, whatever..."

Dr. F: And you look at your watch. It's 7 o'clock and they're all starting at 7:15, we've really got to decide! What do you want to see? What do they say?

Alie: Ummm... they have you pick, and then they don't like that one. [*giggling in shame*]

Dr. F: Aaaahhhh. Argh! Brilliant, these people. They make you choose, you see, and so it's never their fault. Am I going too fast?

Alie: [*still laughing*] Oh, no, no! I'm just making sure we're recording this because it's my favorite episode ever.

Dr. F: Oh, okay. Absolutely, so if I never choose, it's never my fault. You don't want to make a decision, well, that's okay! Your choice! You have that right. But then, as we say in New York, shut up! Okay? If you let me make the choice, you've got to live with that, you see? So again, going back to the movie metaphor. So they see the movie, if the movie is good, we leave, we say, "That was great, that was wonderful." But suppose it's a dud, a stinker, a horrible movie. What do they say at the end? [*sound bite, man says, "This movie SUCKS."*] You know how to treat them? You don't bring the indecisive a place where they have so many options, because they can't handle it, alright? Again, they're not bad people, it's just

Alie: It's DIFFICULT.

Dr. F: Absolutely! Why?

Alie: It is so hard because what if you pick the wrong thing? [*Dr. Ferrari groaning in frustration, "aarrghhh!"*] What if you do it wrong! That's the hardest thing.

Dr. F: So? So? So? Life is full of... Look, when God made us, she gave us knees that bend.

Alie: [*laughing*] She!

Dr. F: Yes. Alright. She gave us knees to bend. We're gonna fall, the question in life isn't "Are you going to fail?" The question is, "When will you fail?" You see? People think, "I don't want to fail, I can't make mistakes..." No, no, no, no – you will make mistakes in life. Life is full of failure. The question is, those knees get you down, but those knees get you up. THAT'S the question; "How do you get back up?" Like the phoenix, how do you rise out of the ashes of the failure? So, you're going to fail in life. Yes, life is full of failure. The question is, did you learn? Did you grow? Did you move on beyond the failure? And that's what people need to understand.

Clinical psychologists say, 80% is great. Not 100%. People want to be PERFECT. "And if I'm not perfect, I'm garbage." NO! You're HUMAN! And no one's there, you're human! And that means you're going to make mistakes, alright? So, the clinician says, if you can reach 80% of your goal, 80% of what's out there, you're a success. A recent study actually supported this. That happiness; you're most content, you're most healthy, with 85% success and 15% failure.

Alie: Really?! [*gasps*]

Dr. F: Yes. Not this 100%. We need failure in life. Now, some failure makes us most adjusted.

Aside: Don't let Beyoncé fool you. When it comes to being flawless, it's never going to happen. And that's a good thing! Salvador Dali once famously said, "have no fear of perfection, you'll never reach it." So, lowering the expectations for yourself is just like undoing the top button of your pants at Thanksgiving, but for your soul. It feels so good, and probably, no-one will notice the difference!

Alie: You're talking about chronic procrastinators, which is... Enough about me, let's talk a little bit about you.

Dr. F: Yes. I am not a chronic procrastinator.

Alie: No, I know! So how did you get into this field? When?

Dr. F: I can only really give... well, it's Valentine's Day... So I'll give you the public reason, not the private reason.

Alie: Oooh, okay!

Dr. F: I know, everybody wants the private reason. But it's Valentine's Day and my wife will be angry.

Alie: Ohhhhh I think I just understood EXACTLY what the problem is. Okay.

Dr. F: But I didn't out her! Okay. Um... Well, sure, I'll give you the history. I think it's nineteen-eightyyy... [*thinking*] seven? '88? I'm in my doctoral program at Adelphi University in Garden City, Long Island. 'Cause I know you go national, so I'll include that. I'm at my doctoral program, and I'm taking a class. Now, this is the 80's, before computers, and I'm taking a class on self-defeating behavior. The instructor was a social psychologist, re-tooling to become a clinician, so she was very interested in understanding *choosing to suffer*. People will shock themselves. [*sound clip of electrical sparking*] They think, "I deserve to be this." Masochism, sadomasochism. She was into all that stuff. And one of the topics was self-handicapping. When will people sabotage their behavior?

So we're in this class, she's covering a small seminar, I raise my hand and I say, "Excuse me, but this sounds like it could be procrastination." And she says, "Well, yeah, sure." I raise my hand again, and I say, "Okay, but what is the research show?" She says, "I don't know. But I'm sure someone's done the study." Again, this is the '80s, so what do I do? I open my notebook and I write the word 'procrastination', and after class I go to the library. Because this is what people used to do! And I go look it up. [*crickets*] And I find practically nothing on the topic of procrastination. Nothing.

I found about 200 conferences and papers, but a lot of it was on writer's block, career indecision... But from a social personality psychologist point of view, like trying to understand what are the causes, and what are the consequences? Nothing. So in graduate school, we heard as graduate students you could either do research... and this is good for your listeners to hear, particularly those who may be studying. You could do something that everybody else does, and you'll be in a body of literature, and you'll follow along. Or, you can go off into something that no one else has done. And then you carve the path, and your name becomes synonymous. And I'm a little...

Aside: And here, Dr. Ferrari mouths a word:

Dr. F: [*very quietly:*] ... pompous. [*clip of British male voice, "Pompous."*] And I like that idea! [*both laugh*] So in the beginning, everything I published, I wrote on procrastination, was publishable. So much so that I remember one journal, they came back and said that they would accept it, but you have to change the introduction where you talk about the literature, because you just keep citing Ferrari, Ferrari, Ferrari. And I got back, and I said, "Well, that's because I'm the only person."

Aside: So yes, Dr. Ferrari is one of the leading experts in this, having been an author of the seminal 1995 textbook, *Procrastination and Task Avoidance: Theory, Research and Treatment* and his less academic and more “hey, I’m screwing up my life with this, and want to understand and fix it”-book, *Still Procrastinating? The No Regrets Guide to Getting It Done*. Now, the threateningly inquisitive, *Still Procrastinating?* Came about because of the horsepucky he often sees on the topic.

Dr. F: So, the title is called, *Still Procrastinating?* Because I got tired of so many people following this time-management myth, and these techniques that just weren’t science-based. So, it really wasn’t hard for me to write, because I knew the literature, you know? Some people say it takes a long time to write... No, I sat there for a couple of months. I mean, we edited it and tweaked it and all that. But typing it up? It was quick, I just knew what to say. And then I looked for interventions. Because I really am more interested in the causes and the consequences, but everybody wants the cure. [*“Fix me!”*]

Alie: So, you decided to write this book?

Dr. F: So I wrote this book, it came out in 2010, because I got tired of all the other stuff that was out there, that really was not based on the science, based on what people were saying.

Aside: He mentions some well-worn advice about eating raw frogs first thing in the morning, (and this is metaphorical, it’s not a Silicon Valley biohack). But I’ve had some luck with time-blocking, which is giving myself specific times to do certain tasks. But Ferrari says, these tactics don’t always get to the heart of a problem.

Dr. F: If you have a list of things to do, put them in order. You know, I grew up, that’s called ‘prioritizing’. That ain’t procrastination. Clearly, if I have a dozen things to do, 10, 11 and 12 have got to wait when I do that. Alright, so I’m working on that, but that’s not procrastinating. The true procrastinator has a list of 12, maybe does 1, MAYYYYBE does 2, then rewrites the list, makes a copy of the list, shuffles things around. [*Alie groaning, “Oh no... ohhhh, noooo”*] Am I right?

Alie: Ooohhhhh, why are you seeing into my soul??!!

Dr. F: No! I’m just saying, so it’s structured. Or another person talks about ‘active procrastination’. Now, listen to those words. Active. Procrastination. How can I actively not do something? Inertia is inertia.

Aside: Dr. Ferrari says he hates to see people taking advantage of the agony procrastinators feel and offering them non-effective or non-scientific solutions. I mean, can you blame him? This man has spent his adult life hunkered over data sets, doing serious science on the topic.

Dr. F: There are a lot of people out there that, you know, are trying to cash in on a real problem, seriously. That’s a problem for people in their life.

Alie: Oh, it’s the worst problem in my life. And I am a super high-achiever, great grades, super perfectionist, everyone always commends how hard I work, and it’s this shameful secret

that I take the most important things and I do them last, because failing at them is devastating.

Dr. F: So, fear of failure is clearly a major motive. But even fear of success can cause people to procrastinate, because if I succeed, what happens?

Alie: Oh, then it's just more work...

Dr. F: So, I'm the lawyer who never finishes the brief on time, so that the firm doesn't give me any additional work to do. I am not finishing the reports that I have to do, because procs [whispers:] *know what it's getting them...*

Aside: What did he call them? Us?

Alie: Um, so, a "proc" is...?

Dr. F: I call them procs. It's short. I'm from New York and everything's got to be fast. Procrastination takes too long, so I call them procs. Procs think the world is about themselves. "I don't like it, I can't do it, I don't wanna fail, I don't look good." The world is not about ME. Life is about WE. If I don't do my task on time, then you can't do your task on time, which doesn't let the next person do theirs. So, life is not about me, life is about we! We live in unity. Common unity. Community.

Aside: And sometimes we're so afraid of letting the community down... That we let the community down. [*slightly unhinged man saying: "sorry, I didn't mean to do it!"*]

Alie: What are the mechanisms underlying that? And I know that this is a whole book's worth, but if someone is just...

Dr. F: Social esteem protection.

Alie: Okay. What does that mean?

Dr. F: What does that mean? Okay. You know what self-esteem is. That's how I feel about myself. Procs are very concerned about what *other* people think of them. Hence *social* esteem. "I want you to like me. I don't want to fail. I don't want to do poorly. I want you to really like me. But if I never finish, you will then say I lack effort, not lack ability." [*sucks in air like something stings*] [*cheerful voice: "Wow! That hurt."*]

Lacking ability is much more stable. It doesn't matter how much effort. It's much more consistent. Lacking effort means, "Maybe I *could* do it. I just didn't have enough time. This would be much better if I had more time. I could really show you then. See, it's not my fault. It's that time got away from me." Time don't do nothing! Time's a constant, which is why you can't manage time. Time management, can I go there?

Alie: Yes. I know that time management is something that-

Dr. F: Is a myth.

Alie: Is a myth, and I have tried that so many times. How do you feel about the Pomodoro method? The Pomodoro method is the kitchen timer 25 minutes on, 5 minutes off.

Dr. F: Oh, okay. Not the fruit that you eat? That's a pomegranate.

Alie: No, no. It comes from Italian for Pomodoro. 'Cause the guy who invented it had a kitchen timer that looked like a tomato. So you set an egg timer for 20, 25 minutes, you work, and then 5 minutes off. Or there's bullet journaling.

Dr. F: For the 80% where it's a time management problem, the procrastination, these things will work. They talk about the Five-Minute Plan that you can break things down. Absolutely.

Aside: The Five-Minute Plan, by the by, I just looked this up, is where you take a dreaded task, a loathsome assignment, and you tell yourself you will do it for five minutes and then you're outta there. And usually in that five minutes you're like "Oh, okay. This isn't hell on earth," because we tend to anticipate a task being so much worse than it actually is. So no harm in trying that tactic.

Dr. F: But if you're the 20%, if you're listening to this and you say, "Yeah, but for me, dah, dah, dah... Okay, this was entertaining. However, in my case, this is not going to work." You need cognitive behavior therapy, also known as CBT, because we need to change the way you think and the way you act. Because again, it's this lack of, "I don't want to show I lack ability," because we're so concerned with that. And yet life is full of failure. You're going to make mistakes and actually, you're going to be healthier if you're going to make mistakes.

Alie: And happier.

Dr. F: And happier! They'd rather have themselves look as lacking of effort. Now, there are three myths. Should I go there first?

Alie: Yes. Oh, the debunking flimflam is one of my favorite segments.

Dr. F: What? Who's that?

Alie: It's where you debunk--

Dr. F: Oh, flimflam is myth.

Alie: Yes, just debunk some flimflam, Dr. Ferrari!

Dr. F: All right. Okay, all right. I call them myths. Okay. [*"Tomato, tomahto."*] One of the myths that people say is, "Technology makes it so much easier."

Alie: To procrastinate.

Dr. F: Yeah. "With my phone and everything else..." I've got to answer that with a story. In 2006, a reporter from Connecticut phones me and says, "Dr. Ferrari, what do you think about the snooze button on alarm clocks?" I go, [*sputters in confused thought*] I don't have a thought of them." He goes, "Oh yeah, that's the first technology for procrastination and it's 50 years old." It was first available in 1956. Yes. I didn't know that.

Alie: I didn't know that either.

Dr. F: We've had a lot of time. And he's right. You gain nine minutes, and there's nothing wrong with gaining nine minutes. The problem is you keep pressing it, you keep pressing it. That's the problem. So then I started thinking about that. Okay, so the technology back in '56 allowed us to do it. What about the telephone? 1885 or... Okay, there was a time you had to

write your letter out, make sure it got to the person, give them five days, give them time to.. Now I could wait. [*voice muffled as if through a phone speaker*] "Hello, Myrtle. Give me a ring," and you could do this at the last minute. The automobile, earlier than the phone. There was a time I had to get my horse and my buggy together, and feed it, and get it all together. Now I could just [*imitates engine cranking*] go in my car. So there's always been technology. Don't give me this poopoo that technology makes it easier.

Alie: Okay. Myth number two.

Dr. F: Myth number two. Myth number two is, "Oh, but Ferrari, you don't understand. Our lives are so much busier today. We have so much going on. I just can't manage it all. It's too much." Mmmm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

What an insult to our ancestors who were farmers, get up in the morning and make sure the field was plowed, fix the roof, get the pump working, can the goods, feed the animal. They didn't have a lot to do? There's 168 hours a week. 24x7, no more, no less. Don't tell me we're busier. We're different. Oh, absolutely, it's not the same, but it's not busier. Don't give me that excuse. Don't insult our ancestors.

You cannot manage time. You only manage yourself. There is an expression: We cannot control the wind, but we can adjust our sails. [*Alie groans appreciatively*] We can adjust how we deal with this, and the Japanese say, "And if there's no wind, row." [*both laugh*] Get yourself going. Absolutely!

Alie: And then what about myth three?

Dr. F: Okay. And myth number... Am I taking too long? Is that why you're moving me along?

Alie: No, I love this. I love this.

Dr. F: Okay. I tell ya, I can talk forever. Myth number three. Okay: "All right, Ferrari, so technology has been there and time has always been the same. But you know, I just work best under pressure."

Alie: Yes. Oh!

Dr. F: "I gotta wait 'til that last minute, Ferrari. It gets me going. It gets the juices moving and dah, dah, dah, dah. And I always seem to succeed." Well now, wait a second..

Alie: Yeah, you've read my journal.

Aside: Okay, but what "juices" are those, exactly? Well, they're stress hormones, and if you need them to get a job done, congratulations! You are an arousal procrastinator, as opposed to the avoidance procrastinators, who just feel like their success or failure at any given task is a huge indicator of their worth on the planet. So, a Tasmanian Devil: arousal. Versus an armadillo: avoidance, if you will. I'm a little bit of both, and as you can imagine by putting those animals together, it's not attractive.

Alie: So what happens? Do we get so scared?

Dr. F: So, yes. So I brought them in the lab, did experiments. A lot of people think the research on procrastination that I and others do are just surveys. Absolutely not. I have done a lot of

experiments, meaning you bring procrastinators in the lab and non-procrastinators, and you have them do tasks. So in a series of tasks, they made more errors at the last minute. They took longer, but they thought they did better at the last minute. There's this *perception*, "I do better."

And if you're talking to procrastinators, procs, they will tell you, "Oh Ferrari. I remember the time when I waited and this thing happened," and you go, "Well, I remember that too. That was like, what, 18 years ago?" You tell them, "That was like, 31 years ago?" and they go, "Yeah, yeah." What about all the failures since? So they will harp on, they will remember, the times when it worked, because life is, as we say in the trade, a variable schedule of reinforcement. You don't always fail. You don't always succeed. And so this is the time it's going to happen.

Aside: Sidenote: a 'variable schedule of reinforcement' was not a term that rolled off my tongue, so I had to look it up. And it means you never know when something will pay off, kind of like lotto scratchers, or playing a slot machine, or swiping right on someone who might not like you back. I myself, not a Vegas gambler. I get no thrills from feeding money into a video game owned by money pigs. So, to put that in perspective, let's look at procrastination as a gamble.

The notion that the high stakes danger of doing something last minute would lead to some jackpot of genius is of course foolish. And Dr. Ferrari says that your odds of doing a good job on something are way higher, and more predictably so, by just doing things earlier, whether that's writing your book of short stories or buying plane tickets. So, procrastination is a huge crapshoot and remember, the house always wins.

Alie: I read in your book that people who procrastinate, in terms of personality psychology, and I have done an episode on that, tend to have lower conscientiousness and higher neuroticism and they tend to worry about the future.

Dr. F: Yes. Yes, yes. Well, neuroticism is not as much as people thought. It's clearly conscientiousness. Now what is it? What are we talking about here? People don't understand that personality researchers have said that there's really five, we call them the Big Five, personality variables. That all comes down to five. And actually there's a sixth, and I can talk about that in a minute. But anyway, there's the big five. And the easiest way to remember, think of the word OCEAN and that will give you an acronym.

Alie: Oh yeah, openness, conscientiousness, yeah. Extroversion...

Dr. F: Openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism spell the word OCEAN. [*clip from Muppet Treasure Island, Fozzie Bear: "Ocean?"*] And that's how I teach students to remember. Okay, so the big one. Interestingly enough, there's very little research on conscientiousness, but procrastination seems to be the strong opposite. So again, when I get pushback from colleagues as to, "This is not a real topic," I say, "Study the opposite of conscientiousness, study procrastination." It's correlated negatively.

I have not done that research. I'm not a Big Fiver, we call them. And in fact, I like, there's a newer model called the HEXACO that adds in the H and that would be on humility and

honesty. What these researchers have found is the five works, but you're missing something. Honesty and humility. Well, I tell people it's hard to be humble when you're great and you know it.

Alie: *[laughs]* And so that also brings it back to social esteem. I mean, that seems like... Procrastination is not a problem that you struggle with but you do have people in your life that you might be close to...

Dr. F: Sure. Lots of them, sure.

Alie: I'll just say that in a general sense and not read verbatim.

Dr. F: For sure. I work with people that have this, people in my parish do.

Alie: Yeah. You may have dedicated the book to someone very close to you?

Dr. F: I don't know, they'd have to buy the book and find out.

Alie: Exactly. *[Dr. F roars with laughter]*

Dr. F: That's the book. What book are we talking about? We're talking about *[Alie says the title in sync with him]* *Still Procrastinating? The No Regrets Guide to Getting It Done*, of course.

Alie: Which there will be a link in the show notes.

Dr. F: Okay.

Alie: So when you're studying this, do your relationships with people close to you who struggle with the procrastination inform your research?

Dr. F: Yes, they inform, but remember these procrastinators are good excuse makers. And so whenever they hear anything I'm talking about, or any podcasts, or any interview that I'll do on the phone, afterwards, they get very annoyed and they come up with an excuse. "You have old research. You're only looking at one thing." So an excuse making. "But you don't understand, in my situation, blah, blah, blah, blah."

Alie: Do you have a gushy empathetic heart for the anxious struggles of the procrastinator?

Dr. F: Absolutely. Don't think I'm being cold. Yes, but I'm not going to let them...

Alie: Get away with it? Because it doesn't help them.

Dr. F: No, it doesn't help.

Alie: You're not gonna enable them.

Dr. F: I'm not gonna enable them, 'cause life is not about them. Life's about us. Life is about all of us. And all I would be doing is... Do I feel bad for them? Yes. And sympathetic? Yes. And I try to advise. I get calls all the time, emails all the time. "I've struggled all my life dah, dah, dah, what can I do?" And I empathize and I say, "Yes, I understand. I'm not a clinical psychologist, however..." I give them just a few tidbits and they go, "*[gasps]* Oh, that's me!" Very much they can relate to it. So I don't think I'm off the mark.

Alie: No, no. You're right on the money, which is what's so painful and wonderful about it.

Aside: So in one of Dr. Ferrari's approximately one billion studies, he looked at different types of artists to see if procrastination is actually an important part of their process. Is it the secret sauce on their Chickenburger?

Dr. F: So I wondered, are these creative procrastinators savoring or are they ruminating about failure? Bottom line, what do you think?

Alie: Ruminating about failure.

Dr. F: Ruminating about failure.

Alie: Now what about perfectionism?

Dr. F: Okay. Perfectionism is also related to procrastination, but it's a separate concept. These two overlap but there's difference. There's a body of literature on perfectionism, but there is a crossover with procrastination. Non-procrastinators are perfectionistic and so are procrastinators. But what's the difference between them? Ah, long story short, the procrastinator is perfectionistic for a motive, a desire to get along. The non-procrastinator is perfectionistic to get ahead. Do you understand the difference?

Alie: Oh, wow. Yes, yeah.

Dr. F: One is, "I want to do the best job to get ahead." The other is, "I want you to like me." You see, "Don't you see I work hard? I'm perfect. Oh, isn't it good? I really worked hard didn't I? [*eagerly panting*]"

Aside: Yes that was Dr. Ferrari mimicking a desperate puppy, in case you're feeling scathingly understood right now, as am I.

Alie: And where does that come from? Does that come from parenthood?

Dr. F: Ah, where's the origin of perfection? You've read some of my stuff.

Alie: Why yes, I have.

Dr. F: You already have your questions in your head. Okay. That's a great question. First of all, there's no gene for procrastination. There's no genetic gene. Every two years there's an international meeting on the study of procrastination. Didn't I say that already?

Alie: Yeah. 2017 in Chicago.

Dr. F: Yeah, so when I did it in 2017 there were researchers from the Denver area who came in and followed up an earlier study of mine on genetics. And they found with identical twins, procrastination was less than 50% explained by genes. So it's not genetic. I had shown earlier in the '90s, when I was pumping this stuff out, that it was parenting style. It's a learned tendency. You learn to become a procrastinator. And that means you can unlearn it. [*DJ airhorn*] You can teach old dogs new tricks, I tell people, you just use a different bone and you take longer. All right, but can you teach them? Absolutely. It's just going to be harder. So what I found was a certain parenting style that caused kids to become procrastinators. And what style is that? It's the cold, unending power, "As long as you live under this roof! I don't want to hear any lip! I said you do this!" Well, that causes a child who can't revolt to

what? Just take their time, which would make the parent what? Even more angry. So you wait for the big one and then you get on.

Alie: Yeah. So it's like a little bit of... It's a little control they can exercise.

Dr. F: Exactly, over this kind of thing. And we found particularly... Let me ask you the question, who do you think you find this more common in? And who do you think causes kids who are procrastinators? Moms or dads?

Alie: Ooh. You know, I just keep thinking about my perfectionist grandparents. I had grandparents who demanded perfection when they'd come over, our rooms had to be spotless, you know, things like that.

Dr. F: Wow. They would look to see if there's any dust?

Alie: Literally, and they would give you a roll of coins and then they would take one away for every indiscretion.

Dr. F: [laughs] Ooh, they were a lot of fun.

Alie: Yep. I got nickels. My older sister got quarters, which was so annoying 'cause I was like, "What?!"

Dr. F: Because she's older.

Alie: Yeah. So? My tiny hands had to make the bed. But I would guess that it would be a demanding father figure, probably.

Dr. F: Yes, yes. It was fathers. Usually we blame everything on Mom. Mom caused it. [clip from *Blue Hawaii*, Chadwick Gates: "Mom, I'm sorry."] In this case, we are finding it's Dad. And they report, procrastinators, a shallower relationship with Dad, more conflict with Dad, less support-finding from Dad. So, given that profile and everything, yes. It's a learned tendency. That's where it comes from, to answer your question, and it tends to begin in the home and this is the way the person has learned to adjust.

And our culture rewards us for procrastinating. Let me go there for a minute, okay? Taxes are coming up April 15th. Now, if you owe money, there's absolutely no reason why you should file earlier. I mean, that's stupid, all right? The government's got it wrong. I'm a fan of, and this is another one of my lines: don't punish for being late – procrastinating – reward for being early.

Alie: Oh, wow.

Dr. F: And the government needs to do that. So, you can't file in January 'cause you're getting all your papers. The government should say, if you can send this stuff in by February 15th, we'll let you save 5%. Well, the government gets it much earlier, you save some money. There's your reinforcement. March 15th, 3%. April 15th, you pay it all. That will not work with the 20% chronic, but it'll work with the 80%. Our culture is punitive. Our culture punishes you. We don't give the early bird the worm. Let's reward the person who does it earlier.

Alie: Incentivizing it.

Dr. F: Incentivize it.

Alie: I have so many questions.

Dr. F: I know, you have lots of questions.

Alie: But I want to get to Patreon questions.

Aside: But of course, before your questions, each week we donate to a charity of the Ologist's choosing, and this week the cause of autoimmune vasculitis research is meaningful to Dr. Ferrari and his family. So we donated to VasculitisFoundation.org in honor of him and his love, Sharon Ferrari. And I looked for an additional charity to send some cash, one that helps people afflicted with procrastination. And I spent honestly an hour googling, googling, googling. Nothin', until line between doing research and just wasting time was so blurred, so I could not find a procrastination charity. I don't think they exist.

VasculitisFoundation.org is this week's recipient. And let that be an indicator of just how little people recognize the impact of procrastination on physical and mental health and on industry. Anyway, that donation was made possible by sponsors of the show who you may hear me talk about now.

[Ad Break]

Okay, back to your questions, and honestly there were so many people with this question, I'm gonna list just first names for brevity and also anonymity. But I see you, my pod children. Ethan, Cat, Andrea, Anna, Leah, Nicole, Julie, Nick, Maddie, and first-time question-askers Maria, Ethan, and someone by the name of 'I'm not your Llama.'

Alie: But the biggest question I got, and I can't even list how many people asked this, was just: Dr. Ferrari, world expert of procrastination, what do I doooooooooo?

Dr. F: Okay. Well, again, if you're part of the 20% where this is your, if I'm honest – I have to tell you the truth - maladaptive lifestyle, that it seems to be pervasive and you've been doing it all your life and you're doing it in all these settings, then you need therapy. [*I deserve it.*] You need cognitive behavior therapy. I don't want to diss any of my colleagues, but I'm saying find a good clinical psychologist who's trained, not in time management, who's going to help you change the way you think and the way you act.

But suppose you're part of the 80% that many of your respondents might have been, people who say, "I only procrastinate at this one thing or this one area of my life." Okay, because they're so concerned about social esteem, what others think, publicly post what you have to do. [*Alie gasps softly*] Put it on Facebook or Instagram, whatever you use. And say, "Friends, this is what I gotta do. Contact me in three days, let me know." They're very concerned about what others will think about them.

Now, that's not a new technique. We talk about how technology advances... Public posting goes back to, god, when I was in college in the '70s, and I remember reading in the '60s that literature on public posting. You're more likely to do something if it's publicly posted than if you don't. So with technology we can use that again, but it's not a new concept.

Surround yourself with doers. Not with people who are going to slack, people who are going to get things done. I didn't finish more about the procrastination and perfectionism. Can I just go jump back there?

Alie: Yeah, of course!

Dr. F: Okay. I had a one-year visiting position in the CUNY system, City University of New York, and while I was there, in Baruch College, well known, excellent school for business. I had a lot of business majors, MBAs, and psychology students studying to be in business. So I had them go out and collect data on their jobs. And I said, "Let's take a vignette, a little story about a guy, we called him Mr. Nolan. He was a company auditor. He worked really hard, but he never got things in on time. Happily married, fine, everything's financially stable. And whenever you asked, he'd say, 'I'm working on it.'" At the end of that vignette, for one third, he calls himself a procrastinator. For another third, he calls himself a perfectionist. And another third, no label.

So they had people at their workplace - I actually use adults, I don't just use college students in my data, 'cause I think it's easy to generalize the non-university populations. So we had the three people, and then they filled in measures on whether they were procrastinators or not.

We compared procrastinators and non-procrastinators on how they evaluate another procrastinator, because my question really was - as I listened to these business people - "If I'm a procrastinator and my boss is a procrastinator, when I come up for my annual review at the end of the year, is she going to be easier on me? After all, we're two of the same. Or is she going to be harder?"

So what did we find? Wow! It didn't matter if they called themselves a perfectionist or a procrastinator, but the procrastinators, more than the non-procrastinators, wanted to fire him. Said 'He's the cause of the problem. He's terrible, horrible.' So what's the takeaway? If you're a procrastinator, even if you call yourself a perfectionist, people are not going to like you. *Other* procrastinators, they want to distance themselves from you. Again, they're very concerned about that social image.

Going back to how to treat it - don't surround yourself with other procrastinators, they're not going to like you! Surround yourself with non-procrastinators.

Aside: Okay, so my fellow procrastinators, the ones who are afraid of doing a bad job and having people mad at you... I have good news, and I have bad news: they're mad at us anyway. Everyone hates us for taking too long. We're just screwing ourselves - there's no need to delay it, people can only like us more. This is a revelation!

Dr. F: In social psychology, another study we did, the concept called 'social loafing,' ever hear of that?

Alie: *Social loafing!?*

Dr. F: Oh yeah, that's an ooooldie. You never heard of that?

Alie: No! [*laughing hard*]

Dr. F: You gotta have me as a regular guest! “Once a month, come on, let’s talk to Ferrari!” Okay, social loafing: when people are in a group setting and the individual performance is not evaluated, like in a classroom setting or a job, ‘I want one report from the group,’ you will get social loafing. People will not do it. Procs are notorious for that.

Aside: In his book, *Still Procrastinating? The No Regrets Guide to Getting it Done*, Dr. Ferrari defines a ‘social loafer’ as someone, say, on a group project who just coasts. Like, hangs back and let’s y’all figure a project out, and maybe *you* think that they are smoking a doobie and playing bongos in the parking lot. Actually they’re wringing their hands in the bathroom, worried they’re just going to let everyone down.

Dr. F: So in one study, we had procrastinators evaluate other people in this scenario who were loafing. Oh, they were living hell!

Alie: Yeah, they were public enemy.

Dr. F: Public enemy! Even if you socially loaf, they’re not going to give you a break. “Why, why, when they’re just like me?” Again, that’s because ‘I want to distance myself’. This is not a socially acceptable concept, and I have seen in the last 15-20 years a lot more media, a lot more on procrastination out there, more than *ever* was when I started 40 years ago. There was nothing. Now it’s a very common thing. So back to what you can do: surround yourself with doers, publicly post, don’t let people let you get away with it, have them hold you accountable.

And then there’s lots of other time management - and I really hesitate as you can hear it in my voice, saying time management ‘cause you don’t manage time. But, break the task down into small little chunks. Have you ever heard of the expression ‘don’t miss the forest for the trees’? In other words, don’t miss the big picture ‘cause you’re caught up with all of the little parts. That’s not the procrastinator’s problem. They *see* the forest - they forget that it’s what? Made of trees.

Alie: Yeah, they just see one big, terrifying abyss.

Dr. F: “Oh my God! I have to do this thing! Holy cow! I can’t do it!” [*Alie laughs*] They *see* the forest! So you teach them: cut one tree. You can’t cut one tree? Give me three branches. Can’t give me three branches? Give me a handful of leaves. What’s the commercial? ‘A body in motion stays in motion’ It’s a law of physics; stopping a train is very hard once it’s moving. So *get going*, just do it now. Not Nancy Reagan’s ‘Just Say No.’ “Just Say Now.”

Aside: Okay, so this next question was asked by so many people on Patreon.com/Ologies, I’m going to say your first names, gonna do it quickly: Margaret, Jaque, Anna, Beatrice, Ryan, Margaret, Alyssa, Jamie, Noah, Elizabeth, Nikuya, Sandro, Moses, Ali, Zoltán, Anne-Sophie, Mike, and my first-time question-asking bibis Tracy, Andrea, Solomiya, Angela, Deborah, Maria, Kelly, Elliott and Xavier.

Alie: And now, what about co-morbidities like ADHD or Generalized Anxiety Disorder? What other factors can someone, maybe, attack that might be a component of their procrastination?

Dr. F: In this book, I actually have in chapter 12, “Looking at Procrastination and Personality Styles,” and some of these negative consequences. I hesitate to say this because sometimes people get very annoyed with my comment, but there’s only been one study that looked at procrastination and ADHD, and I did it. I found practically no relationship.

Alie: Really!? Okay.

Dr. F: Again, people say that’s not true. *Boredom proneness*: different. *Thrill seeking*: different. Easily distractible: yes. But not ADHD. There are different measures we use in psychology and thrill seeking is a measure that Zuckerman... from a long time ago...

Aside: Okay, so I looked this up and the late Marvin Zuckerman’s work focused on sensation seeking. There’s even a sensation seeking scale! And yeah, yeah I found it online and I took it. I answered this 19-point academic quiz, and at the end it said if you checked 11 or more of the items, you’re probably a sensation seeker. If you checked 7 or fewer of the items, you were probably not a sensation seeker. My score - you ready for this? - 6! Just off-the-charts risk averse my friends.

But if you would agree with statements like: I prefer friends who are unpredictable; or I often wish I were a mountain climber; or I would like to try some of the new drugs that produce hallucinations, you might seek thrills. P.S.: this quiz was written in the late 1960s. It was a groovy time.

Dr. F: Zuckerman’s thrill seeking measure: are you easily distracted or are you boredom prone... So while it sounds like ADHD, it’s a different concept. That’s true, but that’s only one study, so I’m not willing to say there isn’t a relationship, although when I say that people in the field get very angry. “You don’t understand!” and all that.

It’s a hard concept to wrap around, procrastination, because it’s sometimes the outcome, and sometimes it’s the cause. I think with ADHD it’s an outcome, procrastinating. But then there’s also, which is my interest, the cause - where it starts. So there are two different ways to look at it. But if nothing else from today’s show, I hope your listeners [or readers] realize that everybody procrastinates and that doesn’t make you a procrastinator.

You told me you had *lots* of people asking questions... I would bet if we looked closer, for many of these people they’re just delaying a task or two - and that’s okay! Look, if I’m a manager, I want to delay. Why? ‘Cause I want information for my employees - not just jump into a decision! That’s not good, effective decision making. You need some time to think. Sure. But the question is, if you have another focus group, and *another* focus group, and let’s do another... *that’s* the problem.

Alie: Elliot Alder, first time question asker, awesome question: How do tell the difference between procrastination and not having enough ‘spoons for the task’ at that moment? How do you know whether or not you really are overloaded or whether or not you’re procrastinating?

Dr. F: Think of this as a continuum. So there could be a moment where you have many spoons, a lot of irons in the fire as they say. There could be a lot going on. But the question is: are there *always* irons in the fire? You ask about treatment. One simple way is to delegate; give

the task to somebody else. But if you have too much to do, trust that someone else can do this for you, someone that you've mentored along or that's skilled enough. Will they fail? Maybe, but if they succeed 80% of the time, be happy with that. Don't harp on the fact that they failed twice. They succeeded eight times.

So if you have too many irons in the fire, too many spoons that you have to feed... consider what you have to do. Again, prioritizing is fine, that's not the same as procrastinating. You're not structuring your procrastination, you're simply learning to prioritize. Procrastinators are very bad at judging time. They either underestimate or overestimate. So another technique is to help them learn to practice time - not to read a watch, of course they can do that! But we're telling them, practice how much time something's going to take, more time or less. Again, this person might be saying they have lots of spoons to use; well do you always find that? Are you good at judging the time? Life is full of peak periods in times.

Another suggestion is we need to reward people who meet the deadlines. So again, if you're a manager and you have a department of 20-30 people and you say, "I need this report done by March 15th, but if you get it to me to look at on March 1st, everybody gets that Friday off!"

Alie: Ahh, got it.

Aside: Now this next question, or a variation of it was asked by Julie Bear, Eva and Janessa about whether or not it's better to dangle a reward in front of your own face, or to swat your butt mercilessly.

Alie: So it's the carrot and not the stick, as they say.

Dr. F: Oh absolutely! We do too much punishing, we don't do enough rewarding.

Alie: Kendra Niederkorn, first-time question-asker, asks: How come when I'm procrastinating, other tasks I don't want to do suddenly seem more appealing? Like cleaning my kitchen when I should be doing my taxes? What's happening, is it like a dopamine response?

Dr. F: No, we're turning to the bio again! And if it is bio, it's much more correlational than causal. They correlate, that doesn't mean one's causing the other. A very common mistake people make is that they take correlation and they make it causal.

Yes, of course you're doing something that's more fun than something that's not fun. On the other hand, you may be doing a task - they both need to be done - you've got to do the taxes, you've got to do the dishes. So it's not illogical, but at some point there's a deadline where the taxes have to be done and you need to pull that together.

Aside: Dr. Ferrari then produced a small weekly calendar; the days filled up with harried notes and tasks, each task scratched off deeply in the tight zig-zags of ballpoint ink.

Dr. F: I'm old fashioned - this is going to blow you away... I write 'em down!

Alie: Oohh, wow look at that!

Dr. F: So I write down in pencil, 'work on taxes'. I think I have that down on Saturday. *[reading]* Work on taxes, next Sunday. I put it down a few times so I can do that. But sometimes it's

even crazier. [*flipping through pages to show Alie more of his calendar-keeping*] I prefer this much better than putting it down digitally, 'cause I can get to much more things when they're done this way.

Alie: [*impressed gasp at his calendar*] And I love that when you're crossing things off, you're not just crossing it off: you're *obliterating* it! [*Dr. Ferrari laughs*] Is there something that's rewarding about, like, "yes, I got it done!" like, *scrrrrraatching* it off?

Dr. F: No. There's a body of literature called *precrastination*: people who like to do things ahead of the time, and I may fall more into that. Because I don't only write it here, I have a calendar in my office, and in my work office there's a calendar by the desk, and when I turn around there's another calendar! So I make sure I have it in both!

Alie: But that's great because the reward is that you get to cross it off!

Dr. F: I get to cross it off each time.

Alie: I mean, sometimes people put things on their to-do lists that they already did just so they can cross it off! That feels amazing! [*laughs*]

Last questions I ask everyone: the crappiest thing about your job, the thing that you hate about procrastination the most, the thing you hate about your work the most, the thing that *just irks you* - the worst thing about what you do? Or the thing you hate the most about procrastination?

Dr. F: The thing I hate about procrastination is people not taking this as a serious problem. You asked me earlier, do I have empathy for the people who are chronic procrastinators? And the answer is yes. I think our society, by not taking it seriously, cheapens it and makes it less of a serious kind of thing, and I think that's not fair.

I think it was Al Green who came up with the line.... whoever sings *Sexual Healing*. If you listen as the song fades off...

Aside: [*clip from the very end of Sexual, Healing, "Baby come back home. Please don't procrastinate."*] Wait, what?

Dr. F: It says, "please don't procrastinate" [*bursts into laughter*] and it's the only time I ever heard that word used! Then there was a singer, I forget her name. She was after my generation, who has a song called *Procrastination*.

Alie: Lizzo? [*laughs*]

Dr. F: No, no she killed herself, I think.

Alie: Oh, Amy Winehouse?

Dr. F: Yes, I think she had a song called *Procrastination*.

Alie: Oh my gosh, I'll look it up.

Aside: [*Amy Winehouse sings: "Anyway, I'll be there to me you at the station. Guilty 'cause I should be home, damn procrastination!"*] So, this leaked song is titled *Procrastination* - it's on YouTube. It's said to be about Amy Winehouse's trouble writing songs after her debut

album. Apparently, she titled the song 'Procrastinate' and it along with about a dozen other tracks are to remain in the vault. She wanted them unreleased in the event of her death. Also, the official cause of death was accidental alcohol overdose, which is tragic and gutting, and for more on addiction, see the Addictionology episode.

Also, as long as we're clarifying things: *Sexual Healing* is a Marvin Gaye song, and I know that you were just *furios* - some of you - thinking I'm just going to leave that hanging out there, but I know, when you get that feeling, you need Factual Dealings. Anyway, procrastination is in the hearts and on the lips of so many artists.

Dr. F: It's not procrastination, but I just love that, "let's not procrastinate" from *Sexual Healing*. So, what do I hate? I hate that after all these years that I've been talking about this in the media, and conference presentations, that people will put me at the end of conferences when I talk because 'you're on procrastination, hahaha!' That we don't take it seriously as a culture. It's more than a time management issue. It's a maladaptive lifestyle for 20% of people: more than depression. I'm not dissing depression, it's a very serious issue. Substance abuse and alcoholism - very serious. We treat those very seriously, *as we should*, and we should really treat the chronic procrastination. I don't like that people still think it's time management issues, because that's a 'socially acceptable' kind of thing.

Alie: I remember when we were writing back and forth, you were like, "Don't make light of this!" and I was like, "Oh no, this is for real!"

Dr. F: And then you had to self-disclose. I was not looking for you to self-disclose, though. Because I went to your videos, and I saw kind of comical, funny things, and I thought, "Oh, she's going to set me up for something funny," and this is not a funny thing.

Alie: No, this is literally The Thing in my life... I have a list of things I want to accomplish in my life...

Aside: Not even a little bit joking, 100% true: the goal 'Conquer Procrastination' is at the top of that list, and I want to scratch it off so hard that the pen rips the paper!

Alie: And so should procrastinators have a little bit more self-compassion? A little bit more, like, 'hey, don't be so hard on yourself'?

Dr. F: Ahh, another good topic for you to interview. There's a great self-help book, I forgot the author's name, on self-compassion.

Aside: I looked this up and he's talking about self-compassion expert and Austin-based psychology professor Dr. Kristin Neff...I felt so stupid because I got her confused with shame expert Brené Brown, and then I went to Dr. Neff's website, Self-Compassion.org, and did a little poking around. And I was like, 'hey Ward, it's okay you got those two researchers confused. You are a fleshy vessel of meat and matter - you're not an information kiosk at Barnes & Noble!' So, thanks, Dr. Kristin Neff!

Dr. F: She weaves a lot of social personality psychology in it. People need to forgive themselves. It's much easier for us to forgive other people than it is ourselves, and that's a tendency people have.

Alie: Last question I always ask - last question: what's your favorite thing about your job?

Dr. F: The exciting part of being an academic, a faculty member, is that you can ask questions and get answers. I love working with my students. The joy of bringing them to a conference and having *them* present? I can't tell you the joy of that! *That's* the job! It's not the money (thought that's nice), it's not the time, it's not the schedule, it's seeing the next generation rise. That's just euphoric.

Alie: And just think of all the people who are going to be studying this and are interested in this field because of you.

Dr. F: I hope so! I hope that your listeners [or readers] contact me if they're interested.

Alie: Read your book first!

Dr. F: What's the name of that book?

Alie: It's called *Still Procrastinating? The No Regrets Guide to Getting it Done* by Dr. Joseph R. Ferrari PhD.

Dr. F: Yes, great book! [*Alie laughs*]

Alie: Thank you so much for doing this, you are amazing! You need your own television show! Can you get your own television show please?

Dr. F: That's fine with me!

So ask experts and smart people stupid questions, and know that they are actually *not* stupid questions. That is an ironic statement. Also, have compassion for yourself - celebrate your own curiosity! And, as Dr. Ferrari inscribed in my now dog-eared copy of [Still Procrastinating? The No Regrets Guide to Getting it Done](#) - 'Just do it - now!'

So that book is available wherever you get books, and I'll put a link in the show notes as well as links to a lot of the things that we discussed in this episode up at [AlieWard.com/Ologies/Procrastination](#), because volitional psychology is too hard to spell, and the last thing you need is a harder time getting to those resources.

So we're @ologies on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#). I'm [@AlieWard](#) on [both](#), come say hi, be friends. Shirts, and hats, and beanies, and totes are available at [OlogiesMerch.com](#) or up at AlieWard.com. Thank you to Shannon Feltus and the recently engaged Boni Dutch (congrats!) of the podcast *You Are That*, for managing merch. Erin Talbert admin's the [Ologies Podcast Facebook group](#). And huge thanks to Emily White and all the transcribers making transcripts available. They are blazing through them, there are so many up and they are so helpful, and I'm gonna put a link in the show notes where you can get those for free. They are on my website at AlieWard.com.

Thank you to Jarrett Sleeper of the mental health podcast *My Good, Bad Brain* for assistant editing. Also, if you liked the Traumatology episode with Dr. Nick Barr, he and Jarrett are now doing free weekly mental health live streams on Sundays at 10am Pacific Time. I live tweeted it last week at the Ologies Twitter, and it's on [Mixer.com/MyGoodBadBrain](#), and I'm gonna put a link in the show notes for that too, because it was really great, and I think you might like it.

Also, thanks of course to Steven Ray Morris of the podcast *See Jurassic Right* and *The Purrrcast* for putting these together each week with me and bearing with my fears of just not being enough. He is a saint, and I'm working on being faster for my sake, and for his. He's the best.

Nick Thorburn wrote and performed the theme music. And if you listen 'til the end of the episode, you know I tell you a secret, and this week is: that I just realized... I was in a sound booth doing some voice over stuff - and yes if you heard me on a grocery store ad, that is me. And I realized in between takes that if you take a regular pencil, like one of those Dixon Ticonderogas, you know, that has the non-rolly sides, and you rub it between your palms... Ready? [*whispering*] I'm gonna do it. This is hella ASMR. Okay, ready? If you do this, [*rubs pencil in hands*] it sounds like a cat purring. [*continues to whisper and while making the pencil purr*] I'm more of a dog person, but if you miss your cat, or you need to be soothed, you can try that. [*continues pencil purr for several more seconds*]

How weird, it's just a pencil. Okay, so that's fun, you're welcome. Berbye

Transcribed by

Rika, your favo(u)rite Aussie friend

Hannah Dent

Mickey McG.

Some more links which may be of use:

[California Academy of Sciences](#) on March 5

[Natural History Museum of LA County](#) March 6

[SXSW EDU](#) on March 11

[Jarrett & Dr. Nick's Sunday livestreams](#) at mixer.com/mygoodbadbrain

[Variable ratio reward](#)

[5-minute rule: not about dropping food on the floor](#)

[Sensation-seeking test](#)

[Marvin Gaye needs some sexual healing, fyi](#)

[Dr. Kristin Neff's work on self-compassion](#)

[Amy Winehouse's "Procrastinate"](#)

For comments and enquiries on this or other transcripts, please contact OlogiteEmily@gmail.com