

# Getting a strong reference from the this pointer too late

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 [devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20230526-00](https://devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20230526-00)

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It is a standard pattern for functions that are coroutines to promote the `this` pointer to a strong reference (either a COM strong reference or a `shared_ptr`), so that the object won't be destructed while the coroutine is suspended. But it might be too late.

Consider the following example:

```
struct MyObject : winrt::implements<MyObject, winrt::IIinspectable>
{
    MyObject() = default;
    ~MyObject() = default;

    winrt::Widget::Closed_revoker m_revoker;

    void RegisterForWidgetEvents(Widget const& widget)
    {
        m_revoker = widget.Closed(winrt::auto_revoke,
            { this, &MyObject::OnWidgetClosed });
    }

    winrt::fire_and_forget OnWidgetClosed(Widget const& sender, winrt::IIinspectable
const&)
    {
        auto lifetime = get_strong();

        co_await DoStuffAsync();
        co_await DoMoreStuffAsync();
    }
};
```

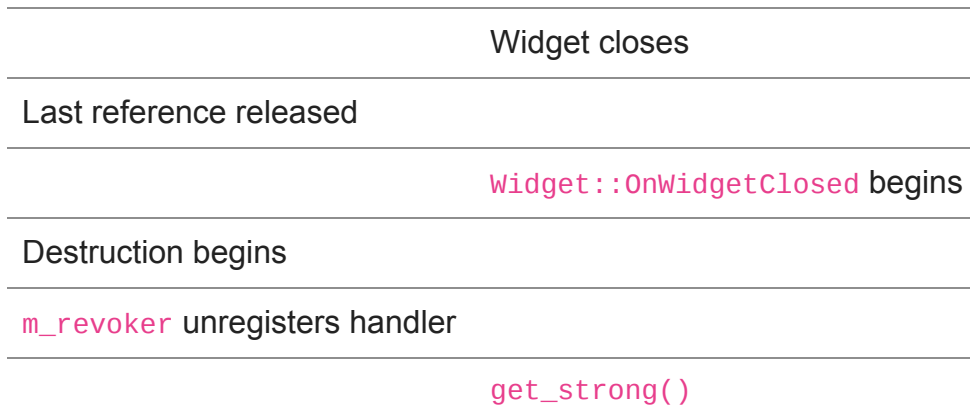
The idea here is that we register for the Widget's `Closed` event with a raw pointer. When the event is raised, the handle immediately promotes the raw pointer to a strong reference, so that the `MyObject` does not destruct during the two asynchronous calls that follow.

But there's still a race condition:

Thread 1

Thread 2

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If the last reference is released before the `Widget::OnWidgetClosed` method reaches the `get_strong()`, then the `get_strong()` method runs against an object that has already started destructing. It will nevertheless produce a strong reference and increment the reference count, but that reference count does not have the power of time travel. The destructor is already running; you incremented the reference count too late. The result is a mysterious crash.

A similar problem exists with `std::shared_ptr`:

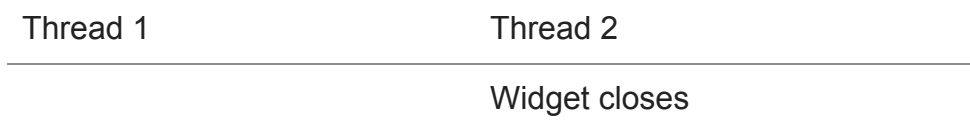
```
struct MyObject : std::enable_shared_from_this<MyObject>
{
    MyObject() = default;
    ~MyObject() = default;

    winrt::Widget::Closed_revoker m_revoker;

    void RegisterForWidgetEvents(Widget const& widget)
    {
        m_revoker = widget.Closed(winrt::auto_revoke,
            { this, &MyObject::OnWidgetClosed });
    }

    winrt::fire_and_forget OnWidgetClosed(Widget const& sender, winrt::IInspectable
const&)
    {
        auto lifetime = shared_from_this();

        co_await DoStuffAsync();
        co_await DoMoreStuffAsync();
    }
};
```



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Last reference released

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`Widget::OnWidgetClosed` begins

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Destruction begins

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`m_revoker` unregisters handler

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`shared_from_this()`

The call to `shared_from_this()` throws `std::bad_weak_ptr` because the weak pointer cannot be converted to a `shared_ptr`.

In both cases, the problem is that the `OnWidgetClosed` callback is registered with a raw pointer. Instead, use a weak pointer and try to promote it to a strong pointer in the callback.

```
// C++/WinRT
void RegisterForWidgetEvents(Widget const& widget)
{
    m_revoker = widget.Closed(winrt::auto_revoke,
        [weak = get_weak()](auto&& sender, auto&& args)
        {
            if (auto strong = weak.get()) {
                strong->OnWidgetClosed(sender, args);
            }
        });
}

// C++/WinRT alternate version
void RegisterForWidgetEvents(Widget const& widget)
{
    m_revoker = widget.Closed(winrt::auto_revoke,
        { get_weak(), &MyObject::OnWidgetClosed });
}

// C++ standard library
void RegisterForWidgetEvents(Widget const& widget)
{
    m_revoker = widget.Closed(winrt::auto_revoke,
        [weak = weak_from_this()](auto&& sender, auto&& args)
        {
            if (auto strong = weak.lock()) {
                strong->OnWidgetClosed(sender, args);
            }
        });
}
```

C++/WinRT provides a helper constructor that does the `auto strong = weak.get()` thing automatically.

Since weak pointers will not promote to strong/shared pointers once the last strong/shared reference is destructed, you don't have the race condition where the callback tries to do something with an object that has begun destructing.

