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## Break Your Bad Habits — Forever

Do you constantly interrupt people, show up late and break promises? Read on and learn how to banish these blunders



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You may think your bad habits are no big deal, but over time, they could end up destroying your friendships — and stunting your own emotional growth. Here's how to liberate yourself, no matter what the issue.

### Interrupting

“Force yourself to listen,” urges Los Angeles-based psychotherapist Stacy Kaiser. “You never know what someone will say.” Try:

- Asking friends if you interrupt too much. If yes:
- Focus on the feeling of your closed mouth when you're quiet.
- Wait five seconds after someone finishes speaking before you begin.
- Later, write down the interruptions you wanted to make. (We guarantee you won't remember half of them.)

### Breaking Promises

“People who do this often have trouble saying ‘no’ in the first place,” explains psychologist James Claiborn, co-author of *The Habit Change Workbook*. Next time someone asks you for a favor, don't answer “yes” immediately. Instead, say, “Let me get back to you.” Then ask yourself:

- Do I really want to do this? No? Explore why you want to say yes. Yes? Say “I'll try my best,” instead of “I promise.”

- Am I sure I can do this? Don't pledge time and resources that you don't have.
- What will happen if I say "no"? Your friends will not hate you. But they might if you make a promise, then bail out at the last minute.

### **Being Late**

Tardy types use lateness to avoid boredom and assert power. If you're punctuality-impaired, executive coach Noah Blumenthal, author of *You're Addicted to You*, advises you to:

- Imagine people waiting for you (guilt works).
- Always double the time allotted to get ready.
- Set your watch ahead 15 minutes.
- Be early once a week, just to see how it feels.
- Bring your knitting or something else to occupy you.

### **Avoiding Confrontations**

People who back away from conflict often fear feeling uncomfortable around their opponent afterward, says James Waldroop, Ph.D., co-author of *The 12 Bad Habits That Hold Good People Back*. To strengthen your backbone:

- Practice defending yourself (politely) with strangers, from rude waitresses to bad dry cleaners.
- Script and rehearse major confrontations. Employ firm-but-friendly language ("I know it wasn't intentional...").

### **Procrastinating**

"Putting things off is a coping mechanism" used by people skirting unpleasant situations, says Springfield, Mo.-based clinical psychologist Nancy O'Reilly. Try these tips:

- Pencil every project and appointment in your date book, with realistic deadlines. Register for free reminders at [onlinereinders.net](http://onlinereinders.net).
- Eliminate clutter and noise from your work space.
- Set a timer and race against the clock. Keeping tasks short boosts focus and motivation.