Common Bad Habits

Everyone has habits that they would probably **be better off without.** You may not have any **major vices** but minor ones add up and deserve attention too. “The small stuff really matters in our lives,” says Elisha Goldstein, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and author of *Uncovering Happiness: Overcoming Depression with Mindfulness and Self-Compassion*. “Life is full of the little things.”

In reality, you’re probably not eating poorly or **shirking on** sleep just once a month, but, more likely, multiple times a week. If you need some help identifying changes you might aim to make, here are some of the most common bad habits and two universal fixes from Goldstein about how we can **change for the better.**

**Stress-Eating**

We’re a country of high-stress and high-calorie foods, so it should be no surprise that emotional eating is a common issue. There are many reasons people **turn to** food when they experience negative emotions, like stress, sadness, and boredom. First of all, food can serve as a distraction from **unpleasant goings-on**. Research has also suggested that foods that are high in fat and sugar may actually (temporarily) quiet parts of the brain that create and process negative emotions.

1. Do you stress eat? If so what?
2. How do you relieve stress?

**Sitting Around**

Surveys have found that people, on average, spend more than six hours a day sitting. Many people sit while commuting, at work, and while unwinding at the end of the day. It may feel like your body is happier taking a seat, but spending so much time off your feet has serious health effects including increased risk of obesity, diabetes, cognitive decline (like dementia), cancer, bone loss, and even a weakened immune system.

1. How much of the day do you spend sitting down?
2. What do you think of the idea of a standing office? Or a standing school?

**Not Getting Enough Sleep**

Days can feel far too short, especially when you want to catch up with friends at a late dinner or **binge-watch** your favorite show. Late nights **in moderation** are okay but getting too little sleep — less than seven hours — on a regular basis can make you more **prone to** long-term diseases, like hypertension and diabetes, and even short-term illness. Being tired can also affect how you function during the daytime, making you less productive and more prone to errors and accidents.

1. How much sleep do you need to function well?
2. How much do you usually get?
3. Are you more productive in the mornings or the evenings?

**Over-Grooming**

Picking at your nose and mouth and biting your nails are already **social faux pas**. They can also be bad for your health. As you should already know, our hands are usually **teeming with** nasty germs. Putting your fingers in your nose or mouth — even to **fish** unwanted spinach **out of** your teeth — is a good way to give those germs easy access to your body. Nail biting, in particular, can also raise your risk of getting skin infections on your fingers and spreading **warts** to other parts of your hand. In some cases, excessive grooming behaviors are considered a mental disorder related to obsessive-compulsive disorders.

1. Do you bite your fingernails?
2. Can you think of any other social faux pas’s? What topics are faux pas when your first meet someone?

**Smoking**

This may feel like **beating a dead horse** but more than 42 million people in the U.S. still smoke cigarettes. Although this number continues to drop, it’s good for people to remember why this habit is such a serious one. Smoking is known to cause several types of cancer — including cancers of the lung, mouth, stomach, and pancreas — and increases a person’s risk of heart disease. It’s also harmful to people who are inhaling second-hand smoke. Plus, smoking is expensive. Even a “cheap” $5 pack every day adds up to $1,825.00 each year.

1. Do you smoke?
2. Have you ever smoked? If so how did you quit?
3. What’s the best way to quit smoking? Hypnosis? Acupuncture? Patches? Gum?

**Skipping Breakfast**

There are mixed findings about whether or not skipping breakfast can help people lose weight. Generally, experts support eating a healthy morning meal because it fuels your body and mind for the beginning of the day. Research has shown that people who eat breakfast perform better in school and at work. If that’s not enough incentive, a recent study from Harvard found that men who regularly skipped breakfast were 27 percent more likely to experience a heart attack or death from coronary heart disease.

1. Do you have breakfast?
2. Find out who has the healthiest breakfast in your group.
3. What’s your favourite meal of the day?

**Overspending**

Another common bad habit is overspending, usually in the form of compulsive shopping. Credit is partially to blame because it is easy to obtain and use, helping people **forgo** responsibility and knowledge about their finances. Overspending is also an easy **trap to fall into** because buying things makes people feel good in many different ways. It can give us a sense of control and add some excitement to a dull day. Being able to spend money can also make us feel better about ourselves.

1. Do you often overspend?
2. Are you a compulsive shopper? If so what do you normally buy?

**Listening to Loud Music**

Hearing is something that often **goes with age** but there are still steps people can take to give theirs its best possible chance. Very loud, short-term sounds and sounds that may not seem so loud (but occur over a long period of time) can both contribute to noise-induced hearing loss. This affects about 15 percent of Americans, ages 20 to 69 according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. Some loud sounds may be unavoidable but exposure anything above 85 decibels (equal to the sound of heavy city traffic) should be minimized. If you have to raise your voice to speak with someone two to three feet away, the sound level is likely over 85 decibels.

1. Do you listen to loud music? If so how often?
2. Have you got god hearing?

**Phone Addiction**

No, your phone isn’t exactly the most threatening addiction. That doesn’t mean it’s something to ignore. Thanks to the advent of push notifications, many of us are now trained to grab our phone the second it flashes — or when we only think it has. This behavior takes our attention away from other things that we should probably value more, like the work in front of us or talking with friends and family.

1. Are you addicted to your phone?
2. How often do you check it?
3. How soon after waking up do you check it?