

The 5 bad habits to leave behind in 2020

Many of us are keen to hit reset and ditch bad habits each new year. And after the challenges of 2020 especially, we might have even more motivation to start fresh and leave the bad behind.

Perhaps you've faced difficult changes, had to do things differently or your working life has been altered entirely – and it's understandable for unhelpful habits to creep into our routines in times like this. But the new year is a great opportunity to review, adjust and move away from what's not working, so you can focus on positive practices instead.

Here are five common habits that could be holding you back, and ways you can overcome them for a fresh start in the new year.

1. **Procrastination**

We all do it. And while taking time out to think or daydream is justifiable, it's usually clear when this turns into procrastination. Small adjustments are key to changing this habit. Break the task you're putting off into smaller steps to focus on just one at a time, and make a timeline with deadlines for each step.

Eliminate distractions: switch your phone to silent, close the unnecessary tabs on your browser and deactivate notifications until you get the job done. Blocking out distraction-free time in short bursts, with breaks, can also help.

There are all sorts of methods and apps for this, but simply setting a timer for 25 minutes can work. Often, just starting the task is the hardest part. By committing to such a short stretch, facing the task becomes more manageable – and you might find you build up the lengths you can focus for over time.

2. **Too much screen time**

We turned to technology for entertainment, connection and keeping on top of changing events this year. Sometimes bingeing TV is all we feel up for. And especially if you've worked from home, it might feel like your days have barely had breaks from a screen.

Excessive screen time has been linked to health risks. Of course, you might

have to use technology most of the day for work, and what's 'too much' will be different for everyone. But often we know the signs – sore eyes, finding it hard to concentrate, sore neck and shoulders, even finding it hard to sleep. If your screen time has you feeling drained, it's worth making adjustments.

If you're working from home, a routine and regular breaks can stop screen time taking over. There are apps and settings that can monitor your time spent on devices – seeing this might be motivation to help you kick the habit. Try different downtime activities: painting, cooking, reading or any hobby you find relaxing might leave you more refreshed than screen-based entertainment.

Finally, be conscious of using screens near bedtime. It's said the light from devices can play havoc with our internal clocks – so try switching off an hour before bed for better sleep.

3. **Running late**

Whether it's repeatedly getting to work after you're meant to or always dialling in late to video calls, lateness can be a chronic bad habit – and could give the impression you're disorganised, disinterested or unreliable.

Figuring out the cause is key: what exactly is making you late? Are you distracted by something? Juggling too many responsibilities, or telling yourself 'one more thing' before you leave? Working out an underlying issue can help you adjust and prioritise.

Next, learn how long you really spend getting ready. Even if you're working from home, time your routine, and compare it to what you thought it was – you might have an unrealistic timeframe in your head, and seeing the real time can help you adjust.

Lastly, don't plan to be on time – plan to be early. For example, if a journey or routine takes 27 minutes, it's easy to get in the habit of leaving exactly 27 minutes to complete it, but inevitably something will hold you up. Plan to be 10-15 minutes early, and learn to enjoy the wait – that little window of time to get a coffee, chat or catch up with your thoughts can be a valuable moment in a busy day.

4. **Letting your wellbeing come last**

In times of difficulty, hardship or change, healthy habits like eating well, exercising and getting enough rest can slip. And perhaps frustratingly, these are times when those habits can be most important. It can be worth reminding yourself that caring for your wellbeing isn't selfish. You deserve to do what makes you feel well – and it can help you better care for those around you, too.

So, if you've picked up an unhealthy habit like sitting too long, or being inactive

– try working from a standing desk, doing stretches every hour, or using your morning ‘commute’ time to go for a walk. If you feel the lines have blurred between your work and home life, [explore setting some boundaries around work](#) for the new year – whether it’s for your hours, workload or when you’re available on email.

[If work worries are keeping you awake, setting aside ‘worry time’ could help.](#) And if you’re feeling especially drained or detached from work, it’s worth looking into [the signs of burnout and how to come back from it](#).

5. **Being too hard on yourself**

We can be our own worst critics at the best of times, and it’s extra important to go easy on yourself when times are challenging. Expectations, achievements, goals – they might be out of reach this year and that’s ok. Much of this is probably beyond your control.

What can help is to focus on what you can control, whatever the situation. If you’ve faced losing your job, that might mean [focusing on coping with job loss](#) through actions like sharing your feelings, then considering [the ways you can bounce back from job loss](#), such as finding routine, setting achievable job-seeking goals, and [looking after your mental health while job hunting](#).

Perhaps you had hopes for change or your next big move in 2020 that didn’t go to plan. Adjusting your goals and [setting realistic, achievable goals](#) in small steps could help you get back on track. [If your career feels stuck, identifying what’s holding you back](#) could help you move forward.

Or if you’re working differently – from home, or in a changed environment – don’t compare what you can achieve now to your previous productivity. Learning [ways to combat negative thinking](#) could help you go easier on yourself.

It could also help to keep a log or journal to note down achievements or wins – even as small as ‘updated the work history section of my resumé’ or ‘helped a colleague talk through a problem’. Looking back at this can remind you of what you’ve accomplished or gotten through.

If you’re focused on finding ways to reset for the new year, working out how to leave behind just one habit that’s holding you back could help. That way, you can make room for positive habits – and a fresh start – in 2021.