

Ban Bad Habits

Face it - we all do things we know we shouldn't, like biting our nails or talking behind a friend's back. So, why not start fresh in 2008 and kick that bad habit for good? In honor of the New Year, here is Relate's guide to banning bad habits.

by Susan Johnston

Nail biting

Why it's so addictive: You probably started biting your nails out of boredom or stress and now you do it without even thinking about it. That familiar feeling of chewing an overgrown nail is tough to give up!

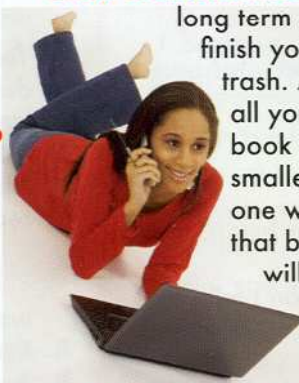
How to ditch the habit: Buy yourself a new bottle of nail polish in a color you really love. Then carefully paint your finger and toenails so you'll be reminded of how hard you worked to get your manicure just right. You can also wear gloves or put tape over your nails when you're home watching TV so you'll think before you bite your nails. If that doesn't work, try using a bitter-tasting nail polish like CONTROL-IT or Thum.



Procrastinating

Why it's so addictive: It's easy to put things off when you have all semester to write that book report or finish that art project. You tell yourself you'd rather watch reruns of Gilmore Girls or text your BFF. But before you know it, it's the night before the due date and it feels like you have an impossible amount of work!

How to ditch the habit: Make a to do list with short and long term goals. A short term goal might be to finish your algebra homework or take out the trash. A long-term goal might be to memorize all your lines for the school play or write that book report. Break down the bigger goals into smaller, more manageable tasks like memorizing one whole scene or writing the first two pages of that book report. This way your bigger projects will seem more manageable and you can map out a realistic schedule. Let yourself take short breaks in between tasks so you'll feel refreshed and rewarded.



Gossiping

Why it's so addictive: We hear about Britney Spears' and Paris Hilton's latest adventures on TV and the internet, so it seems natural to dish about other people's personal lives. Plus, when you hear your friends joking about a classmate's overbite or her funny clothes, it's hard to resist adding your own juicy tidbit so you feel included.

How to ditch the habit: Before you say something that might be hurtful, think about how you'd feel if someone said it about you. If you wouldn't say something to someone's face, you shouldn't say it behind their back (even if you think it's funny, it could still hurt someone's feelings). You never know who might overhear you and pass your comments onto others. If you really want to get in on the gossiping, then stick to celebs and don't spread rumors about people you actually know.



Having a meltdown if things don't go as planned

Why it's so addictive: Maybe you had a pool party planned for your birthday, and it got rained out. Or someone stole your brilliant idea for a science fair project, and you had to find another experiment last minute. It's easy to get caught up in the drama and lose your cool when things go wrong.

How to ditch the habit: Before you start accusing others of ruining your plans, take a deep breath and think about what's really bothering you. You might realize that you're worried about your science grade or you're afraid people won't show up to your party. Focus on how you can solve those problems, rather than getting upset. It also helps to have a back-up plan, so if it rains on your birthday party, you can see a movie or go bowling instead of getting bummed out.

