



## Five Steps to Break Free from Bad Habits That Sabotage Your Success

By Dr. Nancy D. O'Reilly

As much as you may not like to admit it, *you* are the only one who has authority over your behaviors and actions. Only *you* can take responsibility for yourself. That's not something most people like doing, though, because it's a lot easier to let someone else be responsible.



For example, come every January, many people lament the extra pounds they've accumulated during the holiday season, but they rarely want to accept responsibility for the weight gain. Perhaps you've even had a friend blame you for her excess pounds because she ate all the holiday

cookies you baked. But unless you were standing over your friend and force-feeding her those cookies, you were not responsible. Your friend was responsible for continuously eating the cookies, and while this is a simplistic example, it illustrates how easy it is to "pass the buck" and the blame someone else.

No matter what your bad habit is, whether it's overeating, procrastinating, or simply not listening to others, you can break free of such bad behavior and stop sabotaging your success. The key is to locate the reason for the bad habit. Granted, that's often easier said than done, but if you take the time to reflect on a situation, you can usually find an answer.

For example, suppose you know that you're always late for everything — for meetings, for appointments, for work, etc. Your boss pulls you aside and informs you that if you're late for work one more time, you'll be fired, and lo and behold, you're late for work the very next day and lose your job. At that point, you have to ask yourself, "Why do I always run late?" Really think about why you do the specific behavior and be honest with yourself. Perhaps you like pushing the envelope. Or maybe you don't like your job, so you're waiting for the last minute to get there. Or perhaps you try to pack so much into each minute of the day that you couldn't possibly keep your schedule on time.

Whatever the root cause, once you know why you have a certain bad habit, you can take the appropriate steps to correct it and re-create yourself. The following guidelines will help.

### 1. Change your mindset.

If you can't change your situation, then you have to change your mindset. Suppose you discover that you're always late because you don't have the passion you once did for your job. And, while you'd love to look for another one, that may not be feasible right now — you have to stay where you are because you need the paycheck. So instead of giving up and telling yourself, "I'm always late no matter what I do," say, "I am always punctual and make my appointments and deadlines on time." At first you may feel like you're just saying meaningless words, and you may even feel silly. That's normal. That's also the part you have to get over. The point of changing your mindset is to change where your focus lies. Only then can you change yourself.

### 2. Focus on what you like.

If you don't like some aspect of your life, then stop focusing on that aspect and start focusing on the one thing you do like about your current situation, no matter how small it may be. To find the one kernel of happiness that can inspire you, ask yourself, "What keeps me going?" If you dislike one of your coworkers, do you like your clients? Your boss? The fact that you get a regular paycheck? Pinpoint that one thing. Focus, for example, on the money you earn and what that paycheck gives you: money to pay your bills, money to take a vacation, money to send the kids to school, etc. Think about the positive aspects of it. This will give you a reason to work on eliminating that bad habit. After all, if you don't learn to get along with your coworker, you could lose your job and your money.

### 3. See yourself in a new way.

At least once per day for 10 minutes, visualize yourself free of the bad habit that's hindering you. If you're always late, see yourself getting to work on time and sitting at your desk comfortably. See yourself enjoying your job. Take it a step further and visualize yourself getting a raise or getting a promotion. The point is to not let your mind focus on where



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you are; rather, take yourself to a different level. If you think visualization is a waste of time, consider the fact that major pro athletes do visualization exercises all the time to increase their performance. If visualization helps them sink more baskets, throw more touchdowns, and make more holes in one, it can surely help you re-create yourself and break free of bad habits.

### 4. Keep a journal.

If you're sabotaging yourself with a persistent bad habit, keep a journal and find out why you're doing it. If you're always running late to important meetings, you would write down the circumstances that caused you to be late on that particular day. Perhaps you'll write that you were late because you ran into a client at lunch and couldn't get back to the office in time. Or maybe you were late because you were finishing up an important phone call. As you journal, just keep track of the behaviors you are trying to correct and what "sets you off" rather than writing about everything that happened in your day. In other words, make your journal situational. Write down what led up to you displaying a certain habit and how you felt afterwards. You can then review your journal every couple of weeks and pinpoint patterns in your behavior. You can also distinguish between everyday life occurrences you have no control over versus situations you do have power over. Once you see a pattern develop, such as you being late due to a lack of motivation, you'll have greater ability to change.

### 5. Give yourself time.

Remember that it takes 30 days to ingrain a new habit into your daily routine, and if you're like most people, you'll likely "fall off the wagon" occasionally. Should that occur, don't

be too hard on yourself. Honor yourself and realize that slip-ups are a normal part of the process. Find out why you went off track and then continue forward. Also, once you hit that 30-day mark, don't stop the process. Keep doing the affirmations, the focusing process, the visualizations, and the journaling. If you don't, you'll revert to your old habits. Realize that you are re-creating yourself in your mind, and that takes consistent, long-term effort.



### A Time for Change

Bad habits don't have to ruin your success anymore. No matter what your bad habit is, you can eliminate it and be the person you've always wanted to be. So start practicing these steps today. Before you know it, you'll be free of those self-sabotaging behaviors and will attain the success you've always known was possible.

### About the Author

Tamara Vaughn is a speaker and the author of the upcoming book *The PowerShift Principle: Empowering Yourself through Life's Challenges*. She is the president of SuccessNRG, Inc., a transformational company designed to foster personal growth and self-empowerment. Her experience includes 17 years practicing law and 10 years of life coaching, seminars, and workshops. Tamara has weathered the storms of adversity, both personally and professionally, and her expertise lies in helping others to do the same. For more information, contact Tamara at 866-64-Success or visit [www.SuccessNRG.com](http://www.SuccessNRG.com).

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