8 Bad Habits That Aren’t So Bad After All

Few things are all good or all bad, including most habits.

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When it comes to habits, James Clear hit the nail on the head. “Bad habits interrupt your life and prevent you from accomplishing your goals. They jeopardize your health — both mentally and physically.” Oh yeah, they also “waste your time and energy.”

Suffice it to say, you need to work on breaking bad habits and replacing them with good ones. What practices should you ditch? Well, there are some no-brainers — smoking and eating junk food come to mind.

However, there are some habits that we consider “bad” that in reality may be beneficial. Here are eight “bad habits” that aren’t as harmful as you thought.

1. Skipping breakfast.

We’ve all heard breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and if you exercise every morning like I do, you need to fuel up. Also, there are benefits like improving your performance, giving you energy, aiding in weight loss and improving your mood.

However, you can skip breakfast if you want. “If you’re hungry, eat it,” says pediatrics professor Aaron Carroll. “But

don’t feel bad if you’d rather skip it, and don’t listen to those who lecture you. Breakfast has no mystical powers.”

Registered dietitian-nutritionist Karen Ansel adds that “Some people genuinely feel sick after eating breakfast and, if that’s the case, there’s no sense in making yourself feel worse.” Instead, have midmorning snack or wait until lunch.

In short, if you’re hungry and don’t have any side effects, eat breakfast but don’t force yourself.

Related: What Successful Entrepreneurs Eat For Breakfast

2. Getting distracted.

The struggle against distractions is real. How can you stay focused on an important task when you keep receiving notifications on your phone or chatty co-workers? At the same time, distractions can be an assist.

For starters, the brain is wired to get distracted. “The brain can’t process everything in the environment,” explains Ian Fiebelkorn, an associate research scholar at the Princeton Neuroscience Institute (PNI). “It’s developed those filtering processes that allow it to focus on some information at the expense of other information.”

Furthermore, “distractions can be a powerful tool for reducing the impact of painful or negative experiences,” writes Nir Eyal in *Psychology Today*. Eyal adds that distractions can also help control urges, such as eating fatty food and help us become more present.

The key is to block them out when you’re productive but be more tolerant of distractions when you’re running out steam. Leave some blank spaces on your calendar to let your mind get distracted.

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3. Sleeping in or taking naps.

There’s a perception that people who sleep in are lazy and lack self-discipline. While some of us are early risers, most people sleep until their alarm goes off but we’re all better off listening to our circadian rhythms. They’ll let you know when it’s time to get out of bed. It’s actually good for your metabolism.

There’s also been a little backlash against people who take naps. However, taking naps is better than being fatigued. Naps are relaxing, increase alertness and improves our mood. Napping has been shown to lead to quicker reaction time and better memory.

4. Chewing gum.

Chewing gum isn’t the classiest habit in the world but there are a number of perks to chewing gum, such as:

- Boosting mental performance like memory and concentration.
- Increasing alertness.
- Reducing stress and anxiety.
- Helps quit smoking
- Improves eating habits.

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5. Playing video games.

A lot of people think playing video games is a waste of time, or even addictive, but in moderation video games can be extremely beneficial for you.

Research has found that video games can help people overcome dyslexia, make faster decisions, reduce stress and improve vision. But, wait – video games can also help ease pain, slow the aging process, help make new social and neural connections – and even encourage leadership traits.

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6. Keeping your notifications on.

Smartphone notifications are a frustrating distraction. However, research conducted at Duke University's Center for Advanced Hindsight found that turning your phone off can make us feel even more stressed – thanks FOMO.

The solution is to check your notifications in batches. The research shows that you should check your notifications three times only during the day – during your morning commute or when you arrive at work, after lunch and when you're back home at night.

7. Daydreaming.

"Mind wandering is typically associated with negative things like laziness or inattentiveness," wrote Prof. Kalina Christoff of the University of British Columbia Department of Psychology and lead author of a 2009 study that "our brains are very active when we daydream – much more active than when we focus on routine tasks."

"When you daydream, you may not be achieving your immediate goal – say reading a book or paying attention in class – but your mind may be taking that time to address more important questions in your life, such as advancing your career or personal relationships," adds Christoff.

Remember that blank space you left open in your calendar? Use

that time to go ahead and daydream for a bit.

Related: Lost in Thought? Here Are 5 Reasons to Incorporate Daydreaming Into Your Daily Routine

8. Being messy.

Finally, it’s often recommended that we keep our workspaces neat and clean. A cluttered desk or a mess on the floor can distract us from our work, while an orderly space avoids the time wasted searching for misplaced items.

However, a little mess has its advantages. Messy people tend to be more creative, spontaneous and flexible. Research has found that people working in cluttered environments have better ideas. Messy people also have their own unique organizational systems and don’t sweat the small stuff as often.

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