



The Way We Are

Everyone has bad habits, but some people seem to be more afflicted than most. And the only thing more exasperating than people with bad habits are the people who don't know that they have them, and so won't rid themselves of their ill behaviour patterns. Do you recognise yourself in the paragraphs below?

THE ETERNAL PESSIMIST

This person is determined to see the worst of any situation. The glass is always half empty for him/her, rather than half full. The eternal pessimist doesn't miss a chance to throw cold water over any plans: "Don't marry him, he will ruin your life" or "Don't plan a trip abroad. You'll get swine flu."



The reasons

According to experts, this kind of behaviour is extremely common, and very often, people don't even realise it. Pessimism stems from low self-esteem. "Such people don't like or love themselves and lack the self-trust and confidence that is required to see the positive side of life," says *Brunch* columnist and clinical psychologist and relationship expert Dr Seema Hingorrany.

Dr Surbhee Soni, clinical psychologist and hypnotherapist at Fortis Hospital in Delhi, adds that such people are fearful of failure, feel worthless and are lonely. Pessimism might also be a result of a past experience or conditioning by parents. Dr Hingorrany adds, "Since pessimism is very infectious, children often catch it from their parents."

The cure

The first step is to recognise that you have a fault. Notice how people react to you, and if you spot a similar response from most of them, you definitely do have a problem. Then, correct yourself. Dr Rachna Singh, holistic medicine and lifestyle management expert at Artemis Health Institute in Gurgaon, explains, "Every day, list out in a diary how many times you have had or voiced negative thoughts. Then analyse if those thoughts are logical." This exercise makes the person aware that most negative thoughts are unnecessary.

Pessimists often act as soothsayers and predict the future. "We also ask such patients to write down a list and see which fears are rational and which are not. Since a pessimistic attitude also stems from a fear of seeing a fear come true, we persuade such people to see the positives," adds Dr Hingorrany.

GIVE US A BREAK

Are you prey to any of these bad habits? Are people around you tired of putting up with you? Here's how to break free

by Parul Khanna

ILLUSTRATIONS: JAVANTO



THE CHRONIC LATECOMER

This person can never be relied on to turn up on time for anything. Their claim that "I will be there in 10 minutes" actually means an hour's delay. Their excuses range from, "My mom is always late, and so am I" or "I am not a morning person, what can I do?" or "There was a huge traffic jam." Experts agree that many people lack a sense of punctuality and often make endless excuses for their lateness. The result is that others do not take them seriously and view them as irresponsible, explains Dr Hingorrany. This behaviour also angers friends, family, boss and colleagues when it goes on for a long time, she adds.

The reasons

People who are often late lack discipline, and, if others accept this, it tends to become a habit. Abhishek Mishra, a serial latecomer, agrees. "I was always a laid-back person," he says. "But I got worse when I saw that people around me became more accepting of my lateness. My friends would

make plans keeping this in mind and usually give me an hour's window. When I realised I could get away with such behaviour in office too, there was no looking back."

Experts point out that serial latecomers are rarely unaware of their problem. Dr Hingorrany says that such people start to take others for granted and don't feel the need to improve and thus the flaw develops into a habit. Dr Surbhee Soni says that people can become 'late-niks' as a result of various psychological factors too. "They might also have a rebellious nature. Sometimes, poor organisational skills could also contribute to someone always running late," Dr Surbhee Soni explains.

The cure

Chronic latecomers should realise that they cannot test the patience of their friends, family and workmates too far. Since their behaviour stems from sheer laziness, experts say that it is important that these people are told in clear terms that they are not welcome. This will make the offender want to improve. Dr Seema Hingorrany advises, "Plan your day in advance. Start your day with the confidence that you will keep appointments on time. No matter how great a worker or person you are, you are never going to be the one entrusted with responsibility. So, plan to change. Once, you decide to do it, it will happen."

THE PROCRASTINATOR

People procrastinate when they put off things that they should be focusing on in favour of something more interesting. "Everyone procrastinates from time to time. In fact, sleeping over a problem is recommended at times," says Dr Ajay Pal Singh, consultant psychiatrist at Max Hospital. But procrastination becomes a problem when carried to extremes. You know that you have become a compulsive procrastinator when it adversely affects



your efficiency and life, and makes others angry with you: If your phone, electricity bills always have an extra interest because they are late, the ration in your house is always over, or you are infamous in the office for submitting work late.

The reason

Dr Surbhee Soni points out that compulsive procrastinators have poor organisational and decision-making skills. Sometimes, excessive fear of failure or success or even the desire for perfection puts people off from doing something right there and then. "They feel that they don't have the right skills or resources to do things perfectly at the given moment. So, they do nothing at all," explains Dr Soni. Procrastination is also sometimes a result of laziness. Delaying work causes it to pile up more. Result: more procrastination.

The cure

The first step to overcome delaying work is to remember it. Rajan, author of the self-help book *I Love Living, A Practical Guide For Effective Living*, points out that one should use technology - mobile and computer alerts - to remember tasks. Also, let perfection slide. Instead, focus on doing the best job you can. Dr Soni suggests the following: Make a to do list of priority tasks, plan the time and day when you will carry out the task, avoid getting up time and again in the middle of the task, avoid taking calls from friends, reward yourself for completed tasks and ask family and friends to keep a check on you.

Rajan adds that studies prove that people who get up early and sleep early procrastinate less. He adds, "Also, if you keep in mind the price (a friend or boss getting angry and the extra interest if you don't pay bills), you will be motivated to finish it."

THE COMPULSIVE CRIBBER

The compulsive cribber complains about everything and exhausts everyone's patience. Dr Singh explains, "Most times, compulsive cribbers just crib and do nothing about the supposed problems. They also feel that everyone else is getting a better deal than them."

The reasons

Dr Singh says that compulsive cribbers indulge in self-pity, lack empathy and are quite self-centered. Sometimes, people may not realise the extent to which their constant complaints annoy others. Cribbing is infectious. "One doesn't require any sort of qualification to start complaining. It is more convenient to be a part of the problem, than to be a solution maker," says Dr Soni.



SEEMA HINGORRANY

MIND BODY SOUL

USE YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Whether you're having an argument with your boyfriend or trying to reason out things with your colleague, you present the major portion of your communication through your emotions, not your words. For any relationship to thrive, it requires two people who are doing their best to understand how their emotional patterns take shape and manifest themselves in their relationships. The stakes in learning to harness our emotions are high. Say the wrong thing, or miss an emotional cue, and you can goof up big time. When we're in control of our emotions, we can accurately display our trust, empathy, and confidence. Lose control and we spin into confusion, depression, and doubt.

WHAT IS EI? Men and women who have successful relationships, family life and a large number of friends have one thing in common: they know how to deal with people. Emotion, communication and conflict are the three things present in all human interactions and they impact each person differently. The ability to properly interact with others is one of the most powerful tools for personal and professional success which can be enhanced by raising our EI. Researchers have concluded that people who manage their own feelings well and deal effectively with others are more likely to live content lives. Plus, happy people are more apt to retain information and they do so more effectively than dissatisfied people.

The following are a few examples or the methods people use to avoid feeling their emotions:

Symptoms of emotional flu in relationships

- Ignoring your feelings.
- Pretending something hasn't happened.
- Overeating.
- Excessive drinking of alcohol.
- Exercising compulsively.
- Any type of compulsive behaviour.
- Always keeping busy so you can't feel emotions.
- Constant intellectualising and analysing.
- Excessive reading or TV.
- Keeping conversations superficial.
- Burying angry emotions or masking them.

When you're building a house, you first construct a strong framework. To build a stable relationship, you need to create a framework of strong emotions to safeguard you in the emotional storms we all encounter:

Emotional intelligence includes such things as:

- Identifying your feelings and needs.
- The ability to read others' feelings and respond with empathy.
- Power to anticipate emotional "triggers" and prepare to manage them.
- Knowing how to express your feelings with words and/or body language.
- Choosing when to contain (not repress) emotion, and when to communicate emotion appropriately.
- The ability to process and let go of emotion when the situation demands.
- The ability to give and receive love.

Rebuilding your EI:

- Being aware of your emotions is the single most important step you can take towards change. Think about what you will do instead of allowing the emotion to take over. You might want to express something like "I'm feeling very angry about that at the moment, perhaps it would be better to discuss it when I am feeling more calm." Choose something that usually helps you calm down, rather than increasing the emotion.
- Be flexible. Adapt quickly to the changing world.
- Include humour and laughter in your life.
- Develop an attitude of optimism. This will have a positive impact on others.
- Express your emotions. Talk with your partner. Don't keep things bottled inside.
- Good self-care is the best medicine. Start with adequate sleep and nutrition and regular exercise.
- Lastly, love yourself and others. Appreciate yourself and cherish relationships.

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The cure

Before you go on a tirade, check if your cribbing is helpful, say experts. If not, don't waste your breath and others' patience. Says Rajan, "Ask yourself if, 10 years from now, these problems will really matter. Get over small issues and think positive thoughts." Dr Singh suggests: "Pick three people who you know and list out their problems. It is important for someone who cribs nonstop to be less self-centered and see that other people go through the same kind of problems. We often send patients to NGOs for voluntary work just to make them realise that they are not as unfortunate as they think they are." Author Rajan says that it is necessary that people get out of self-pity. It is a deterrent to happiness and growth.

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