

# Five Bad Relationship Habits and How to Break Them



By Marianne Beach, GalTime

We've all heard the infamous break-up line: "It's not you, it's me!" But what if it really *is* you that's been sabotaging your relationship— without even knowing it?

Psychiatrist Rebecca Gladding, MD, co-author of "You are Not Your Brain: *The 4-Step Solution for Changing Bad Habits, Ending Unhealthy Thinking, and Taking Control of Your Life,*" offers us the top five bad relationship habits we slip into...and how to break them once and for all.

**Bad Habit #1: Pointless arguments**

## **How to Break it: Stop, assess and refocus**

**Gladding says:** If you find that what started off as a legitimate difference of opinion over something specific has devolved into either of you bringing up old issues or simply trying to make a point to win the fight, you need to stop the conversation and take stock of what's happening.

Rather than blame either person, simply note what just happened, take a breath if you need to and refocus the conversation on the original point. Say something neutral, like "I think we got off track, you were saying before that you thought/felt," or "I think we got off track, what I'd really like to talk about is..." By not placing blame and keeping to the original topic, you can avoid saying something that you both might later regret.

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## **Bad Habit #2: Making assumptions**

### **How to Break it: Ask instead**

**Gladding says:** We've all done this. He does or says something that you take one way, when he really didn't mean what you thought he just implied; or, he doesn't do something in the way you expected him to.

Rather than assuming his intentions, thought process or feelings, ask him to help you understand where he's coming from. You might be surprised to learn he had actually thought something through more than you assumed, was planning to do something later or didn't realize how you might take his comment. So, when it's not clear, ask him."

## **Bad Habit #3: Endlessly seeking reassurance**

### **How to Break it: Ask once (or twice), and then move on**

**Gladding says:** Although it's important to ask him how he

feels or what he's thinking, there is a limit to this. For example, if you repeatedly ask him the same questions to get reassurance or more information about a prior event or conversation, he might begin to think you did not believe or trust him the first time.

Rather than asking him about the same topic/event several times, ask once or maybe twice, get the answers you need, say what you need to say and then move forward.

**Related:** [What to Do When He Pulls Away](#)

**Bad Habit #4: Checking his email/texts**

**How to Break it: Have a talk about trust**

**Gladding says:** This is very tempting— and people do it for all kinds of different reasons. Is he talking with an ex? Is he cheating on me? Is he getting me that ring? Invading someone's privacy in this way almost never leads to a good outcome and often results in mistrust and resentment. Rather than snooping, look at his behavior. Is he acting like he normally does or has something changed? For example, is he coming home at night at the usual time? Is he following his usual routines? Is he attentive and loving with you or is he distracted?

The bottom line is that if you do not trust him, checking his email and texts is not going to improve your relationship. You might need to have a conversation with him about your concerns and/or consider whether you trust him enough to be in a relationship with him at all.

**Related:** [Can We Have TOO Much Communication and Honesty?](#)

**Bad Habit #5: Having serious conversations via electronic media**

**How to Break it: Wait to say it face-to-face**

**Gladding says:** Although emoticons have helped some people, having a serious conversation via email/text is a big mistake. Not only are you unable to tell his tone, you are missing eye contact, body language and other vital information. And, while the phone or Skype might be an alternative in urgent situations, it's still not the same as being in the same room with someone.

I can't tell you how many fights get started this way when really it was a misunderstanding in how someone read the text and assumed subtext. In most cases, the entire misunderstanding could have been avoided if the two people talked in person. This is why I always recommend meeting in person if you need to discuss something important, especially if there is a chance one of you might misinterpret what's being said.