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How to Train Your Mate to Stop Bad Habits

Six tips to confront your mate about them

By Stacy D. Phillips

If you are reasonable, like most people, you will agree that no one is perfect, especially your mate. So, when it comes to feeling let down occasionally whenever your mate does not live up to your expectations, it might be easiest just to let it go, whatever "it" might be -- like not dressing appropriately for the company dinner party or forgetting your "the-night-we-met" anniversary.

Constant and annoying habits, on the other hand, such as cracking knuckles, chomping gum fiendishly, blowing one's nose at the dinner table, and drinking out of the orange juice carton while perusing the contents of the refrigerator, are hard to overlook, because these irritants are usually grating habits you have to deal with whenever you are in the company of your mate. Eventually, such habits can push you to a tipping point in your relationship.

For the sake of keeping what may otherwise be a perfectly solid relationship together, it is important to nip the problem in the bud by letting your partner know what it is that he/she does that drives you up the wall. Fair enough, you say, but how do you go about confronting your mate without starting a huge fight, or worse yet, blowing the relationship altogether?

The following six tips are recommendations I offer for approaching your mate to get him or her to stop those annoying habits "in the name of love!"

1. **Make a gentle request.** Why you may find it hard to believe, sometimes your partner is clueless that he/she is annoying you. Let's say he/she lets the gas tank ride on empty before pulling into a gas station, making you a nervous wreck whenever you are in the car together. Rather than scream and yell, sit your mate down in a place where there are no distractions and then, in a sincere and kind tone, let your mate know that his/her nonchalance about the precarious fuel situation is making you see red. Don't attack. Be nice. Sometimes doing it nicely is all it takes.
2. **Offer up a comedic demonstration to graphically illustrate the point.** Maybe your mate talks while the film is up on the screen, prompting embarrassing admonishments ("ssshh!") from those seated around you in the movie theater. Providing your partner with a precise re-enactment of such an incident might very well break him/her of this grating habit. Besides, showing your mate what it is like provides a fun way to broach the subject with him/her. Done humorously, this can be an ideal way to have that confrontation.



3. **Offer to give up one of your pesky habits if your mate agrees to give up one of his/hers.** Let's say your lover chomps gum with a vengeance and it drives you batty, but you crack your knuckles when you are tense, which makes your mate nuts. Suggesting a trade-off is a very positive way to kick off the confrontation and lose a couple of needless habits.
4. **Ask nicely how your mate would feel if the "shoe was on the other foot."** Your partner may not realize what it is like to be on the other end of a habit. For example, let's say it is your mate's custom to start eating at the restaurant before your own food has arrived. Ask your partner how he/she would feel if they were still waiting for their meal while you had nearly consumed all of yours. Sometimes getting your mate to picture him/herself in your position may be all it takes.
5. **Let your mate know you will reward him/her in some way for dumping that aggravating habit.** As you begin to confront your mate, preface your remarks by telling your lover that you will give him/her something they want (like a back rub or foot massage) each time they make a conscious effort to stop that annoying habit. Let's say it is tradition for him to cheer raucously each time there is a playoff game with his favorite sports team. Tell him if he keeps his emotions in check (instead of acting like a fool or blowing out your eardrums), you will make it worth his while.
6. **Without making a spiteful threat, let your mate know that his/her habits are, unfortunately, turning you off.** Open communication in any personal, intimate relationship is a must. Confronting your partner with the reality that you feel repelled or turned off by the behavior is something he/she is entitled to know. Speaking up is important, even if it is uncomfortable for you to do so.

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