

Why Keeping Your Promise is Good for YOU

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What was the last promise you made to someone?

If you are like most people, you make commitments to others all the time. Question is - how often do you keep your promise? It is impossible to follow through on every single one you make in life, but how many you break and how you handle it when you do is key to [understanding](#) yourself.

When we don't keep a promise to someone, it communicates to that person that **we don't value him or her**. We have chosen to put something else ahead of our commitment. Even when we break small promises, others learn that they cannot count on us. Tiny fissures develop in our relationships marked by broken promises.

We are not only communicating all of this to others, we are telling ourselves that we don't value our own word. We think it is okay to let someone down, to say something we don't mean, or to fail to follow through on something we said we would do. Not keeping a promise is the same as disrespecting yourself. Ultimately it can harm our [self-image](#), [self-esteem](#), and our life.

If you are making more commitments than you can keep, ask yourself the following questions:

What is my [motivation](#) behind the promise? Why am I making a particular commitment? What is my intention? Am I doing this for the recipient **or for myself**? Sometimes we do something purely out of good intentions. Other times it is for what we will receive. We might believe that we need to say "yes" to get what we want or to ensure someone will like us. We tell people what we believe they want to hear so they're happy. Be honest with yourself about why you are committing to something. What are you getting out of the deal? That might clue you in as to whether or not you should make the promise in the first place.

Am I being realistic? Life moves at the speed of light and we often have to pick and choose how we spend our time. Consider your schedule, and ask yourself if this is a promise you can keep. It is always better to under-commit and over-deliver than over-promise and fall short.

Is it crucial for me to make this promise? There is nothing in life that says you **MUST** make promises to others. If you don't know if you can come through or not, it is fine to simply set appropriate expectations. Tell your neighbor that you would [love](#) to help plan the block party but are unsure if you can do it because of your busy schedule, and that you will let her know next week. People respect honesty even when faced with an answer that might not be exactly what they want to hear.

When I break a promise, do I handle it well? When we unexpectedly get the holiday shift at work, do we let our family know as soon as we can that we won't be able to make it for Thanksgiving? When a significant event arises that prevents us from meeting a friend as promised, do we give that friend a heads-up early enough so that she can make other plans? Most people are reasonable when it comes to a change of plans, as long as we have an explanation and are kind about it.

Keeping these things in mind can help us manage commitments more effectively, which helps us feel positive about our track record! Keeping our promises is good for others and good for us!

Name(s): _____

Keeping Promises

What important points did you get out of this article? Answer the following questions below with your accountability partner.

1. When you break a promise, what message are you sending to that person?

b. What message are you sending to yourself?

2. What 4 questions/ideas should you consider when thinking about making a promise? Write them in **your own words**.

3. What are 3 pieces of advice that you would give someone about promises?