

Me and My Habits

by ReadWorks



The first thing I do every morning, before I stretch or get out of bed, is rub my eyes three times with closed fists. Then I get out of bed and tap my right big toe on the floor three times before walking to the bathroom to brush my teeth.

It's not that I enjoy the odd habits or anything. I'm just used to them, and they're kind of a part of me. As I brush my teeth, I look at myself in the mirror. I like to inventory things about me that relate to my family. I have light green eyes and thick eyebrows like my dad's, a short nose like my mom's, and a ton of freckles, like my older brother Joey. If you look at my face closely, you will see that I am really not my own person. I'm just someone made up of the different parts of everyone else in my family.

My friend Susanna says that's kind of a morbid way of thinking about my life, but I don't think

she knows the correct way to use the word "morbid."

After I'm done brushing my teeth, I walk back to my bedroom, toe-to-heel, very slowly. Then I get dressed for school. We have to wear a uniform, so I wear the same thing every day: a blue and green plaid skirt with a navy blue polo shirt and black loafers. Susanna finds the uniform boring (she says it infringes on her self-identity), but I don't mind it so much. It's just one less thing I have to worry about in the morning.

I eat the same thing for breakfast every day: oatmeal with bananas and a few spoonfuls of brown sugar. My mom prepares breakfast for Joey and me because our dad has usually already left for work by the time we're ready for breakfast.

Joey sits at the head of the table, and I sit at the foot of the table. He always reads the sports section of the newspaper, and I always get the front page.

On the way to school, I buckle and unbuckle the seat belt two times. My mom doesn't ever say anything, but my habit seems to really annoy Joey.

"Rose, *stop it!*" he says, turning around to glare at me from the front seat.

"Just ignore it!" I respond, and click once more.

"Settle down, settle down," Mom says.

We are all quiet on the rest of the way to school. My mom says it takes her a while to wake up in the morning; otherwise she'd be chattier. I don't mind though. It's sometimes nice just to watch the streets go by out the car window, with the people walking along the sidewalks. We always listen to the same radio show, "The Darnell Owens Show," whose emcees talk about movies. They especially love film noir.

When we get to school, Joey slams the door behind him, and I reach between the front seats to give my mom a kiss good-bye.

In school, I meet Susanna by our lockers. They're right next to each other in a prime spot by our classroom, because Susanna complained to the principal that she didn't feel comfortable "expressing herself" on the inside of her locker next to any other person in our grade. (Susanna's dad is a lawyer, and her mom is an artist.)

I open and close the locker three times before I reach inside to grab my books for social studies and math.

Susanna is chattering on about this new painting she and her mom did in her mom's studio when

the long shadow of William Jones crosses over us.

"Hey, freaks," he says.

Susanna and I glance at each other.

"What do you want, William?" Susanna says defiantly.

I'm always in such awe of her bravery. William started making fun of us when we were in first grade. That's when my habit really picked up, and he noticed that I was tapping the doorway three times every time we left the classroom or sneezing three times, even when I didn't have to. Well, Susanna started sticking up for me, which is how we became such great friends, but it only made things worse with William. Soon William started mimicking Susanna when she raised her hand to answer a question (which she did often), and mocking the way she walked, always with one hand on her hip.

"Just wanted to say good morning. Just wanted to say good morning. Just wanted to say good morning," he says, smiling and curling his lip. "Three times... Right, loser?"

I shake my head and turn back to my locker, like what he says doesn't hurt my feelings. I can't help my habit-it just pops up when I least expect it. My mom says the people who make fun of me are ignorant, but she still takes me to see Dr. P. every week to try to help me get over my habit.

"Doesn't it get old?" Susanna asks.

"Nope!" William bares his teeth at us and then walks into the classroom.

"Just forget him," Susanna says, patting me on the back. I'm glad Susanna is on my side.

Joey and I take the bus home together after school. At the bus stop, Joey always gets off first. He's supposed to wait for me to get off the bus before starting to walk home, but he rarely does. I end up walking a few yards behind him, watching his dirty backpack move up and down as he moves.

Mom has a snack waiting for us when we get home-carrots and ranch dressing-and every day we have to eat it and then do our homework right away. Joey says he does his homework in his room, but he's just playing video games. Mom lets him get away with it.

I sit down at the kitchen table and pull my worksheets out of my backpack to start in on my math homework. Mom sits next to me, takes a carrot out of the plastic dish, and dips it in ranch.

"How was school?"

"It was okay. William was teasing me again." Mom looks sad when I say this.

"I'm sorry, sweetie. Things will get better," she says.

"I know," I say. I do my homework and then go read in my room until it's time for dinner.

I wonder if I will ever "kick my habit," as Dr. P. likes to say. Dr. P. thinks that my habit is something I can train myself to give up. She thinks that with a little bit of effort on my part and with lots of help from her, I can learn not to need my habit to feel comfortable. Most of the time, I believe her and even want to kick my habit. Maybe then, Joey wouldn't be embarrassed of me, and William wouldn't tease me. But without my habit, I don't think that Susanna and I would have become friends. I also don't think that I'd feel the same sense of happiness I feel when I touch things or do things three times. There's something very back and forth about my relationship to my habit-I'm not sure I'm ready to give it up. Maybe someday in the future.

"Rose, dinner!" Mom calls.

I go to the bathroom, look at my face in the mirror, and wash my hands three times before going downstairs to eat.

comfortable

com · fort · a · ble

Definition

adjective

1. giving or feeling comfort.

She wears comfortable shoes so her feet don't hurt.

He feels comfortable in his new house.

Advanced Definition

adjective

1. having a feeling of well-being or bodily ease.

He is comfortable only with his friends

I'm more comfortable in the new bed.

2. quite sufficient to one's needs; somewhat more than adequate.

a comfortable home

a comfortable salary

3. providing bodily ease.

a comfortable sofa

comfortable shoes

Spanish cognate

comfortable: The Spanish word *comfortable* means comfortable .

These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:

1. Boys and girls may feel more **comfortable** raising their hands if they know they won't be embarrassed in front of the opposite gender.
2. We give those recommendations because we want people to feel most **comfortable** . Some people can move their heads, and it doesn't bother them at all.
3. "Once you feel **comfortable** running one mile, try running a mile and a half," White says. "Or if you can run for five minutes, try six minutes."
4. "Teachers have to always be prepared," she says. "I never know what my students are going to ask me or in what subject they might need extra help. So, at night, I make sure I feel **comfortable** with what I am going to teach."

hábito: The Spanish word *hábito* means habit.

These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:

1. PE proponents say students who learn to lead active lifestyles will keep those healthy **habits** with them as they become adults.
2. Trombley suggests that drivers have passengers take calls or send texts for them. Or, better yet, get into the **habit** of tuning out incoming messages until they can be safely answered.
3. These individual sports are designed to help fight childhood obesity by getting kids involved in fun physical activities. Obesity is the condition of being dangerously overweight. Another goal of these nontraditional activities is to promote lifelong fitness **habits**.
4. Competitive eaters are sometimes rushed to hospitals because of problems such as vomiting and ruptured stomachs. The contests also can cause long-term health issues. "Competitive eating [promotes] poor eating **habits**, which could lead to obesity," Dr. Naveen Mehrotra from Piscataway, N.J., says.
5. Since 1985, the restaurant chain Pizza Hut has been running the Book It program, which rewards students for reading with personal pan pizzas. Now some people are taking a slice at Book It. They say the program promotes poor eating **habits** and gives Pizza Hut free advertising in public schools.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Who is the narrator of this passage?

- A. William
- B. Rose
- C. Susanna
- D. Joey

2. Rose describes her "odd habits" throughout the passage. Which habit does she do each morning before brushing her teeth?

- A. rubs her eyes and taps her right big toe on the floor three times
- B. eats three bowls of oatmeal and bananas for breakfast
- C. buckles and unbuckles the seat belt three times
- D. opens and closes her locker three times

3. Rose shares a lot of information about Susanna, including things she has said, kind things she has done, and information about her life. Based on this, what conclusion can be made?

- A. Rose and Susanna are the same age.
- B. Rose and Susanna are close friends.
- C. Rose and Susanna have a lot in common.
- D. Rose and Susanna are strangers.

4. Rose experiences some negative consequences because of her habits. Which detail from the text supports this conclusion?

- A. Rose's friend Susanna thinks Rose has a morbid way of thinking about her life.
- B. William Jones makes fun of Rose.
- C. Rose's mother reassures Rose that things will get better.
- D. Rose thinks she wouldn't be friends with Susanna without her habit.

5. What is this passage mainly about?

- A. an argument between two close siblings
- B. how the narrator's habits affect her life
- C. a friendship between two classmates
- D. a visit to the principal's office

6. Read the following sentences: "I like to **inventory** things about me that relate to my family. I have light green eyes and thick eyebrows like my dad's, a short nose like my mom's, and a ton of freckles, like my older brother Joey."

As used in the passage, what does the word "**inventory**" mean?

- A. to ignore
- B. to criticize
- C. to make a list of
- D. to learn about

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Rose thinks that if she kicked her habits, maybe Joey wouldn't be embarrassed of her and William wouldn't tease her. _____, she also thinks that without her habit, she wouldn't have become friends with Susanna or feel the same sense of happiness she feels when she touches things or does things three times.

- A. In conclusion
- B. However
- C. Frequently
- D. So

8. How have Rose's habits affected her relationship with her brother Joey? Use evidence from the passage to support your answer.

9. According to Rose, how did she and Susanna become great friends?

10. At the end of the passage, Rose concludes, "There's something very back and forth about my relationship to my habit." Explain why Rose says this by using evidence from the text.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is a meaning of the word **comfortable**?

- A. serviceable
- B. customary
- C. very great

2. What is another meaning of the word **comfortable**?

- A. found in the ordinary course of events
- B. relating to or belonging to the Republican Party
- C. free from stress or conducive to mental ease

Please use each answer choice only once. Choose the one word that best completes the sentence.

3. I need a vehicle that is _____ to ride in.

- A. comfortably
- B. discomfort
- C. comforting
- D. comforted
- E. comforts
- F. comfortable
- G. uncomfortable

4. He felt _____ and never knew what to say.

- A. comfortably
- B. discomfort
- C. comforting
- D. comforted
- E. comforts
- F. comfortable
- G. uncomfortable

5. He was _____ fed, _____ out of predators' reach, comfortably alone down in his watery home.

- A. comfortably
- B. discomfort
- C. comforting
- D. comforted
- E. comforts
- F. comfortable
- G. uncomfortable

6. Less swelling means less _____ for the patient.

- A. comfortably
- B. discomfort
- C. comforting
- D. comforted
- E. comforts
- F. comfortable
- G. uncomfortable

7. The smell of the sea was familiar and _____.

- A. comfortably
- B. discomfort
- C. comforting
- D. comforted
- E. comforts
- F. comfortable
- G. uncomfortable

8. Both Atlanteans and Minoans were aficionados of art, decoration, and personal _____.

- A. comfortably
- B. discomfort
- C. comforting
- D. comforted
- E. comforts
- F. comfortable
- G. uncomfortable

9. Her parents _____ her, but she was very sad for weeks as she said goodbye to all of her childhood friends and the neighborhood they played in together.

- A. comfortably
- B. discomfort
- C. comforting
- D. comforted
- E. comforts
- F. comfortable
- G. uncomfortable

10. Please write your own sentence using the word **comfortable**.

11. What would you like to remember about the meaning of the word **comfortable** so that you can use it when you write or speak?

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is a meaning of the word **habit**?

- A. a person who represents others
- B. a usual way of doing something
- C. material made from animal skin

2. What is another meaning of the word **habit**?

- A. an established custom
- B. a political statement
- C. a hardship or trouble

Please use each answer choice only once. Choose the one word that best completes the sentence.

3. As he told us the old tale his blue eyes would lighten and darken; his laugh was sudden and happy; he _____ pulled at a cowlick in the center of his forehead.

- A. habits
- B. habit
- C. habitually

4. The U.S. Government is helping people change their eating _____.

- A. habits
- B. habit
- C. habitually

5. If you want to change this _____, you need to plan your time better.

- A. habits
- B. habit
- C. habitually

6. Please write your own sentence using the word **habit**.

7. What would you like to remember about the meaning of the word **habit** so that you can use it when you write or speak?
