How to Handle Broken Promises

The diagrams below describe how you could potentially handle broken promises. Please note that there is no perfect process to handle broken promises. The emotional consequences caused by broken promises ranges from situation to situation and from person to person. This is just intended to be a guide of potentially helpful thoughts. It is possible that someone is so upset by a broken promise that they will not allow effective communication to take place.

### Plan
- **Bigger promise**
- **Remake promise**
- **Smaller promise**
- **Make no promise**
- **Create a documented plan**

### Prepare for accountability
- Mentally prepare
- Remember that you believe in accountability
- Act how you want others to act

### Apologize
- “I’m sorry…”
- “I should have…”
- “I didn’t…”
- “I broke a promise.”
- Listen
- Stay consistent with your apology
- Avoid excuses

### Listen and stay consistent with apology.
- Communicate plan
- Explain why you are committing at this level
- Stay committed to your plan
- Do not cave to pressure unless conditions have changed

### Communicate new level of commitment
- **Communicate plan**
- **Explain why you are committing at this level**
- **Stay committed to your plan**
- **Do not cave to pressure unless conditions have changed**

### Show the plan
- Show your documented plan
- Explain what might go wrong
- Ask the person to check in with you

### Ask why promise was broken
- “Innocent until proven guilty”
- Remember there could be a misunderstanding
- Be careful with your tone when asking

### Listen and be reasonable
- Be understanding to hard-to-predict happenings or a certain amount of human error
- Act how you want others to act
- Remember accountability matters

### Communicate consequences of broken promise
- What negative consequences occurred
- Stick with facts
- Communicate personal feelings
- Avoid or limit accusations

### Ask for new level of commitment
- Bigger promise
- Remake promise
- Smaller promise
- Make no promise
- Create a documented plan

### Ask to see a plan
- Get something in writing
- Talk through potential misunderstandings

### Hold the person accountable
- Schedule time to check in on the promise
- Try to be supportive in your tone

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You have broken a promise.

This is a template-based exercise to help you better understand how broken promises have functioned or could function in your life. Write a plan for a promise that you have broken that **you still need to discuss** OR write a plan for a promise that you have broken that **you wish you could go back and handle differently**. For information on what type of information to put in all of these boxes, please refer to page one of this handout.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Prepare for accountability</th>
<th>Apologize</th>
<th>Listen and stay consistent with apology.</th>
<th>Communicate new level of commitment</th>
<th>Show the plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your new level of commitment?</td>
<td>Write down a promise that was broken to you. Use this as a reminder about why accountability is important.</td>
<td>Write your apology statement.</td>
<td>Write down an upsetting comment that this person might say to you.</td>
<td>Explain why you justify your new level of commitment.</td>
<td>Write down some things that might go wrong with your attempt to fulfill this promise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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A person has broken a promise with you.

This is a template-based exercise to help you better understand how broken promises have functioned or could function in your life. Write a plan for a conversation with someone who has broken a promise they have made to you. This could be a conversation you still need to have or one that you wish you could go back and handle differently. For information on what type of information to put in all of these boxes, please refer to page one of this handout.

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<tr>
<th>Ask why promise was broken</th>
<th>Listen and be reasonable</th>
<th>Communicate consequences of broken promise</th>
<th>Ask for new level of commitment</th>
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<th>Hold the person accountable</th>
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<tr>
<td>Why did you think this promise was broken?</td>
<td>What external circumstances were beyond this person's control?</td>
<td>How did this broken promise negatively affect you or others?</td>
<td>What is the new level of commitment you want?</td>
<td>What planning would you like to see this person do?</td>
<td>What would be the best way to check in on this person? How often?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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