

remember the power of receiving a certain small keepsake box. I excitedly put all my things in it, all the things that mattered to me, all the things that had meaning; nothing mattered anymore but what was in that box. But then after one, two, maybe four days tops, I grew tired of the box, or the hinge broke, or my disloyalty made itself evident when I chose not to take it to a sleeper at Rosalie Press's house. Any number of scenarios may have occurred that ultimately led to the same feeling of disenchantment. Brodsky is my new box.

## BROKEN

The CD player in our kitchen causes the first three songs to skip. The CD player in the baby's room no longer functions at all, although up until recently, at least the radio worked. I've broken every computer I've ever owned. My current printer and fax programs are incompatible. I jam the Xerox machine nearly every time I touch it. I go through Walkmans like paper towels.

The screen on our back porch is so badly ripped that the kids don't even bother opening the actual door, they simply lift the big, detached flap and walk right through it. The children's bathtub drain is partially clogged with small toys; actually, there is no real drain there—it was broken years ago and now we compensate by stuffing a washcloth in there, every single night. Their double stroller has snapped in half.

There are long black wires hanging from the ceiling in my office because we still haven't installed the lights and fans. The fan light in the master bedroom never once worked. The light switch in the baby's room has never once worked. Our beautiful antique chair in the family room has had visibly broken springs for half a year now. I just noticed that one of the handlebars on my treadmill fell off. The boys broke my fa-

vorite barrette. I broke the glass serving dish with the decorative dolphin trim. We do not have a single glass left from our bridal registry.

## BROKER

It is weird and unsettling that a person who is hired to handle your money, make wise decisions about it, and, ostensibly, keep you from losing it is called a broker.

## BROTHER

My brother, who grew up with three sisters, was I won't say how many years old when he finally realized that he did not have to wrap the towel around his chest when he came out of the shower.

## BUSY

*How you been?*

*Busy.*

*How's work?*

*Busy.*

*How was your week?*

*Good. Busy.*

You name the question, "Busy" is the answer. Yes, yes, I know we are all terribly busy doing terribly important things. But I think more often than not, "Busy" is simply the most acceptable knee-jerk response.



Certainly there are more interesting, more original, and more accurate ways to answer the question *how are you?* How about: *I'm hungry for a waffle; I'm envious of my best friend; I'm annoyed by everything that's broken in my house; I'm itchy.*

Yet *busy* stands as the easiest way of summarizing all that you do and all that you are. *I am busy* is the short way of saying—suggesting—my time is filled, my phone does not stop ringing, and you (therefore) should think well of me.

Have people always been this busy? Did cavemen think they were busy, too? *This week is crazy—I've got about ten cases to draw on. Can I meet you by the fire next week?* I have a hunch that there is a direct correlation between the advent of coffee chains and the increase in busy-ness. Look at us. We're all pros now at hailing a cab/pushing a grocery cart/operating a forklift with a to-go cup in hand. We're skittering about like hyperactive gerbils, high not just on caffeine but on caffeine's luscious by-product, productivity. Ah, the joy of doing, accomplishing, crossing off.

As kids, our stock answer to most every question was *nothing. What did you do at school today?* *Nothing. What's new?* *Nothing.* Then, somewhere on the way to adulthood, we each took a 180-degree turn. We cashed in our *nothing for busy.*

I'm starting to think that, like youth, the word *nothing* is wasted on the young. Maybe we should try reintroducing it into our grown-up vernacular. *Nothing.* I say it a few times and I can feel myself becoming more quiet, decaffeinated. *Nothing.* Now I'm picturing emptiness, a white blanket, a couple ducks gliding on a still pond. *Nothing. Nothing. Nothing.* How did we get so far from it?

See also: Coffee, Stopping for;  
Crossing Guard; Nothing

## BUTTERFLY

Once you learn how to draw a butterfly, you just want to keep doing it. There is something calming and satisfying about drawing them. Maybe it has to do with the symmetry, and the curves of the wings.

## BUTTERSOTCH

I love butterscotch but rarely think to seek it out.