

HOW TO VANQUISH AN ENERGY VAMPIRE

Tips for dealing with people who suck the life out of you.

BY MAURA RHODES

The drama queen friend who seems to hear every invite to meet up for wine as, “Let’s meet up so I can whine.”

The co-worker with the permanent scowl who drags down meetings with heavy sighs and rolling eyes.

The hypochondriacal cousin whose only contribution to family potlucks is a giant woe-is-me casserole with a side of my-latest-symptoms salad.

Chances are you know someone like this, who leaves everyone they encounter feeling drained, deflated and needing a nap. You may even share a home or a cubicle with one.

Many psychologists and human-behavior scientists call such people energy (or psychic) vampires: modern-day Nosferatus who feed off the goodwill and positive energy of others to satisfy their own needs—for love, attention, pity, recognition, praise, ego-boosting—leaving their victims feeling sapped and even sick.

How do you defang the Draculas (or Draculinas) in your life? Will they shrink into the dark shadows if you flash a cross or a garlic bulb at them? Truth is, it’s likely you won’t be able to change them at all. Instead, learn what kind of demon you’re dealing with and then protect yourself accordingly.

HOW VAMPIRES GET THEIR FANGS

Many energy vampires are well aware of what they’re doing, sinking their psychic fangs into your head and heart in ways that can cause lasting mental or emotional damage.

“Vampires do more than drain our physical energy,” Judith Orloff, MD, a psychiatrist, empath and intuitive healer on the psychiatric clinical faculty at the University of California, Los Angeles, writes in her e-book *Energy Vampire Survival Guide*. “The super-malignant ones can make you believe you’re an unworthy, unlovable wretch who doesn’t deserve better. The subtler species inflict damage that’s more of a slow burn,” typically by doling out little digs here and there that eventually wear you down.

Christiane Northrup, MD, agrees. In *Dodging Energy Vampires: An Empath’s Guide to Evading Relationships That Drain You and Restoring Your Health and Power*, she writes that they’re “chameleons who can be master manipulators, getting what they want from others without giving anything in return.”

Northrup believes such vampires often are victims themselves—of psychiatric conditions. Although the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) does not have a code for the Morticias that are lurking among us, Northrup says that their behaviors square with “Cluster B” personality types—sociopaths, psychopaths, narcissists, those with borderline personalities, and people who tend to be highly antisocial.

On the other hand, some energy vampires truly have no idea how they affect others. Northrup calls them inadvertent energy drainers and says they’re easy to identify by how they react to your telling them, kindly and compassionately, how they affect you.

If they’re mortified and apologetic, you’re not dealing with a vampire—they’re simply going through a prolonged rough spot and not coping very well. Even better, now that you’ve cleared the air you may be able to help them in a meaningful way.

METAPHORICAL STAKES THROUGH THE HEART

What about the energy suckers who won’t accept being called out? If it’s someone you don’t need in your life or can easily avoid, break off the relationship. But spouses, relatives,

business partners, close friends and others you must, or want to, keep close are another story. Keep them at bay:

Just Say No Northrup calls this tactic “becoming empowered in the negative.” When an energy vampire tries to pull you into a toxic situation, turn them down. Or redirect: Instead of dining with a parent who criticizes or lays on guilt, suggest a movie or activity where conversation isn’t key. **Just Say Yes (Or No)** In other words, speak as monosyllabically as possible. Remember, energy vampires feed on reactions of others; if you don’t offer one up, you won’t be appetizing to them and they’re likely to back off.

Leave the Room This tactic comes in handy when you can predict the outcome of a situation; for example, you sense your mom is gearing up to put you down. Call her out on it—“I

can see you’re starting to be critical, so I’m going to go for a walk/read my book/take a bath.” She may not like it, but you’ll have saved yourself from being sucked dry of self-esteem.

Play Sick Vampires often use health concerns to create drama and get attention. Turn the tables by claiming you or a family member is ill. (Within reason: You don’t want to feign a fatal illness to trick someone.) They’ll “evaporate like fog in the hot sun,” according to Northrup.

Don’t Pick Up The best response to energy vampires who only call when they need something—money, to complain, to ask for favors—is no response. Be honest if they ask why you’re avoiding them, and be ready to take some flak. Who knows? It might just transform them into someone whose company you can enjoy.

If you’re going through a tough time, or tend to be hard on yourself, you may be more vulnerable to a vampire attack.



Energy vampires don’t want to hear they’re less than perfect or hurting you. Be prepared to field some anger and blame when you stand up to them.