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WITH THERAPIST
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Friday Fix 229 — 5 Signs You're Giving Negative People Too Much Power Over Your Life

Welcome to *The Verywell Mind Podcast*! I'm Amy Morin, the editor-in-chief of Verywell Mind. I'm also a psychotherapist and a best-selling author of four (soon to be five) books on mental strength.

My newest book is the *13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do Workbook*, and it hits the shelves on February 28th. But you can pre-order it now! It's filled with mental strength-building exercises that will help you build the mental strength you need to live your best life.

You're listening to The Friday Fix! Every Friday, I share a quick mental strength strategy that can help fix the thoughts, feelings, and actions that can hold you back in life.

And the fun part is we record the show from a sailboat in the Florida Keys!

Don't forget to subscribe to us on your favorite platform so you can get mental strength tips delivered to you every single week.

Now let's dive into today's episode!

Today, I'm talking about the telltale signs that you're giving negative people too much power over your time, your thoughts, and your energy.

It's something we've all done. Maybe you dislike a coworker and you spend a lot of time thinking about how you dislike what they say in meetings or how they act around the office. Or maybe you don't like someone in your extended family and you spend a lot of time dreading every event that they're going to be at.

The truth is, negative people should take up the least amount of space in our lives. But it's really easy to get that wrong—and to allow negative people to get the most of your attention.

Of course, people just say things like, "Cut out toxic people from your life." But, just because you don't enjoy someone's behavior doesn't mean that person is toxic. And you can't always cut someone out of your life. If you want to keep your job, you can't cut your boss out of your life. Or if you want to stay in a relationship, you may have to learn to live with your partner's ex whom they co-parent with.

It's important to recognize the warning signs that you're giving someone too much power over your life. Here are five big warning signs that you're letting a negative person take up too much space in your life:

1. You talk about them a lot.

There's the idea that venting releases pent up anger and frustration. But that's actually not the case.

Venting adds fuel to the fire. In fact, a 2002 study published in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* found that the more people thought and talked about people whose behavior upset them, the more frustrated and aggressive they became. People who distracted themselves with other activities became calmer and more relaxed.

We're not like a pressure cooker that is going to explode if we don't get our frustrations out. Quite the contrary. The more you keep rehashing things that upset you, the more likely you are to stay stuck in a negative spot.

So when you're tempted to complain to someone after work about how much you dislike a colleague or your boss, you're now allowing that person to take up your spare time. And the more you talk about them, the more upset you are likely to become—which means you're giving that person power over your feelings.

So you might decide to talk about more pleasant topics and more positive people and see what happens. You'll likely feel better and you'll enjoy your conversations with other people much more.

2. You think about them when they're not around.

Rehashing someone's rude behavior or replaying that dreadful conversation in your head over and over again gives a negative person power over your mind.

Of course, we've all done this. Maybe you wake up at 3AM and you can't stop thinking about a conversation that didn't go well. Or maybe you keep staring off into space thinking about how much you dislike how someone else behaves.

The more time you spend thinking about them, the more time you give them. Even dreading a future interaction with a negative person gives that individual power over you. If you spend two hours dreading a one-hour event with someone, you've let that person steal three hours of your time.

3. You allow them to limit your life.

Saying things like, "My family holiday party is ruined every year because my sister-in-law has to be the center of attention," or "I'll never enjoy my job as long as my boss is here," allows a negative person to limit your life.

Be aware of the conclusions you draw about how much impact someone has over you. Sweeping generalizations and catastrophic predictions are likely to turn into self-fulfilling

prophecies if you let them. If you decide you'll never be happy as long as you have to work alongside a certain individual, you'll likely make that so.

4. You let them control your emotions.

Getting frustrated or feeling angry by someone else's inappropriate behavior is normal. But it's not healthy if you feel like someone else has control over how you feel.

Maybe a negative person can make you so upset that it takes you two hours to calm down. Or maybe your stomach churns at the mere thought of seeing a particular individual.

Strong emotional and physiological reactions are a sign someone has too great an impact on your life. There are several things you can do to manage this—from practicing breathing strategies that keep you calm in a meeting to choosing to walk away from a conversation when you start to get upset.

5. You allow them to negatively influence your behavior.

Being surrounded by too much negativity can lead to an "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" attitude. If everyone else lies, cheats, and steals without paying the price, you might feel compelled to jump on the bandwagon just to stay afloat or allow your emotions to get the best of you.

Perhaps you say mean things on social media or you become passive-aggressive in an attempt to take back control. No matter what you do, if it isn't in line with your values, you're giving people around you too much power over you.

So those are five signs you're giving negative people too much power over your life but what do you do about it if you notice it's happening?

Fortunately, there are ways to take back your power from negative people. Even if you can't physically distance yourself from an individual, you can set healthy boundaries and prevent them from draining your mental strength.

You might also need to set boundaries on how long you're going to think about someone or talk about them. Perhaps you decide you'll think about something on your commute and then once you arrive home, distract yourself with other things. Whenever your mind drifts back to that person, remind yourself that ruminating isn't helpful and distract yourself again.

Choose to focus on more productive things in your life. Commit to coping with your emotions in a healthy way. And decide to focus on what you *can* control—your thoughts, feelings, and behavior.

Make it a conscious effort to give negative people less power over your life and watch what happens. You'll become a happier, healthier, and stronger person.

If you know someone who could benefit from support as they build mental strength, share this show with them! Simply sharing a link to this episode could help someone feel better and grow stronger.

Do you want free access to my online course? It's called "10 Mental Strength Exercises That Will Help You Reach Your Greatest Potential." To get your free pass, all you have to do is leave us a review on Apple Podcasts or Spotify. Then, send us a screenshot of your review. Our email address is podcast@verywell.com. We'll reply with your all-access pass to the course.

Thank you for hanging out with me today and listening to *The Verywell Mind Podcast!* And as always, a big thank you to my show's producer (who is pretty skilled at not letting negative people drag him down), Nick Valentin.