

▶ **Protect Yourself from the
Top 10 Self-Esteem Leeches**

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Introduction

Having a healthy self-esteem means that you have confidence. You feel sure in what you can do. You like who you are as a person and you respect yourself. It means that you can see the value of being you.

Self-esteem is important because how you view yourself guides what you believe and how you feel. It also impacts how others feel about you. Unfortunately, there are leeches that can latch onto your self-esteem and drain it dry.

You want to protect yourself against these kinds of people, and sometimes, that means making the difficult decision to distance yourself from people who are close to you.

The Negative Leech

This is a leech that can be found in conversations. You can recognize it because this leech will try to make you feel bad about yourself. The words sound okay, but are said in such a way that they erode how you feel about yourself.

An example of a conversation leech would be, "Your dress is beautiful. It would look better on you if you'd lose a few pounds." This is the sucker punch conversation.

The first part of it was kind and so you were relaxed and open. The blow came next - and many people are caught off guard. It affects the self-esteem because we internalize it, making what was said about us - instead of the person who said it.

You can get rid of leeches like this by saying in return, "That's kind of personal. Why would you say something like that?" A leech can only walk away with your self-esteem if you allow it.

People who tell you that you're ugly, or fat or stupid or worthless are self-esteem leeches. Don't give them another second of your time. Don't put up with these types of comments.

You're not their beliefs. Those statements are a reflection of them, not you. But what's worse than those kinds of negative leeches is when we become our own negative leech.

We tell ourselves that we're ugly or fat or stupid or worthless. We erode our self-esteem ourselves. No one is born with this kind of self-talk. We learn it from a self-esteem leech.

Once you adopt their behaviors and you're saying this kind of stuff in your head every time you have to make a decision, you find your quality of life deteriorating rapidly.

The Social Media Leech

This has become a huge leech and it's growing bigger and sucking the self-esteem from millions of people. Social media opened the door for so many people to become leeches.

They bully and they tear down others, they drain away at the self-esteem of others in order to build themselves up. They say snarky comments to people that sting way down deep.

Most people take the comments of perfect strangers to heart and don't take the time to recognize the comments for what they were - the attitude and actions from someone who doesn't have the capacity for online maturity.

You have to ignore comments that try to tear you down on your social media sites. There are many people who consider themselves expert trolls – whose sole purpose is to cause friction online. It's their form of entertainment.

Social media can be a self-esteem leech if it causes you to look at someone else's life and wish that were your life. What you need to remember is that social media presents a false balance of life to the world.

You only get a peek at it. The perfect house, the perfect family, the smiles and laughter and heavily edited photos don't show the true picture. Don't let these false representations tear down your self-esteem.

A lot of social media is embellished because people find it easier to present a better version of their lives - and it often greatly differs from reality. Keep in mind that many people are too self-conscious to speak up about the sad side of their lives.

The Mistake Leech

You wouldn't be human if you didn't make mistakes. Some people make a lot of little mistakes, while others make mistakes that are pretty big. But you must realize that the mistakes that you've made do not define who you are.

They're not a picture of your future. Mistakes are simply something that happened that can offer you the opportunity to learn from the situation. The leech presents itself in this area by not allowing you to move on.

When we make mistakes, it's often those closest to us who won't let it go. They remind you of your mistake and it can feel like they're rubbing your nose in it. They remind you how you tried to start a business and failed, how you ruined your finances, how they warned you that the guy or girl you were crazy about was bad news.

These mistake leeches can be hard to take, but even more so when you're the one putting the mistake leech on yourself. You remind yourself about how you failed.

How you wish you hadn't done what you did. Get rid of this self-esteem leech once and for all by telling yourself that it's over and you're moving on into the right direction.

Tell others the same thing if they keep bringing it up. Don't drag your mistakes around with you and don't let others pile them on you, either. Take a firm stance against having the past thrown in your face to knock you down as you try to better your life.

The Approval Seeker Leech

Some people have a laid back personality. Others have a more forceful personality. Both can have strengths to offer. But the problem arises when someone with a stronger personality decides what your life should or shouldn't be.

They try to make it so that you have to seek their approval in every aspect of your life. When you try to do something on your own, they're quick to tell you why that won't work and how it's not smart of you to attempt it.

What this does is erode your self-esteem until you're driven to come to them for advice and help with whatever you want to do in life. These kinds of leeches keep you dependent on them for your happiness (and theirs) and you surrender control of your life to them in return.

You don't need approval to be who you are and to live the kind of life you've always wanted. Your actions are your own and you're smart enough to reach for your dreams without having to seek approval.

If you don't know the way that you should go, take a deep breath and relax. You will learn. You are capable. You don't need anyone else's stamp of approval for your path.

The Comparison Leech

This nasty leech is one that we put on ourselves and we all have trouble with this one. It can erode self-esteem pretty quickly and leave you feeling unhappy with your life - even if you have a pretty good one.

This leech makes you feel like you're not doing a good enough job with handling your life because it fails to measure up to someone else's. Even a multi millionaire can suffer from this as he compares himself to a multi billionaire.

The comparison leech piles on us when we feel jealous of someone else. We can experience jealousy because they appear to have a partner or spouse who treats them better.

We can feel jealousy because their house is nicer. Their car is newer. Their clothes are more expensive. Maybe they have a better job. Perhaps they can afford to do home renovations that you wish you could do.

They get to take lavish vacations to places that you've dreamed of going. This kind of comparison robs you of living your life. You don't know what's going on in someone else's life and looking at it from the outside can often give you a distorted view.

It could be that you have more freedom than they do. That you're not in debt like they are, that you're not dealing with the emotional situations they're hiding from the world. You never know what's truly going on with someone else.

Get rid of this leech by recognizing and being grateful for the good that you have in your own life. Refuse to allow negative feelings to tower over someone else's seemingly good fortune.

The What Others Think of You Leech

This leech steals self-esteem. We assume that people are thinking thoughts about us that are less than kind. We believe that they're having conversations and our names are cropping up.

In these conversations, nothing good is being said. They're surely discussing the way that we look. They're talking about how poor our products are. They're discussing rumors they've heard about us.

Believing this makes us feel self-conscious and awkward. It robs us of what could be beautiful friendships and new opportunities because we shy away from these people or we keep them at arm's length - afraid to say or do something that will give them more fuel to think about us or talk about us negatively.

You can get rid of this leech by realizing that other people really aren't dwelling on you or your life. Everyone is far too busy to keep up with someone else's life. They have all they can handle with their own.

So don't let yourself dwell on what you think others are saying. Worst-case scenario, you're right – they are ridiculing you. So what? Other peoples' opinions have no place in your life.

The Perfectionism Leech

This is the leech that will not allow you room to truly live. When you allow this leech to attach to your life, you don't leave room for much good because what happens is this leech brings with it the waiting game.

You have to wait until everything is perfect for you to make that move personally or professionally. You don't take chances with new ideas or ventures because perfectionism doesn't welcome mistakes.

You can begin to develop an all or nothing mentality. Perfectionism is a terrible leech because it can leave you feeling bruised inwardly. You'll beat yourself up every time you make a mistake.

And since you *will* make mistakes as long as you're breathing, you'll go through life thinking that you'll never be able to do anything right. The perfectionism leech will convince you that you will never be good enough.

You'll walk around believing that you're a failure before you even attempt to do anything. This leech keeps many people stuck in a life of wanting more but never having it because you would have to risk failure.

The Drama Leech

These are leeches that take from you, destroy your self-esteem and make you absolutely miserable. Many people are familiar with these leeches in their personal life.

They understand that people who take and never give back aren't good for them. With a drama leech, whatever is going on their life is absolutely the most important thing - and you must help them deal with it immediately.

You have to put your personal or professional life on hold in order to bolster them up, and keep them from going under. If you do, you get sucked in every time they need you.

This destroys your self-esteem when it reaches the point to where you can't be there every time they need you because it's impacting your life negatively. Your significant other isn't happy about the amount of time the drama takes you away.

You miss work or you can't concentrate on work because the drama leech is wrecking your time or taking over your thoughts. Your boss tells you that you're just not cutting it at work any more, or a business partner feels let down by your lack of focus and commitment.

To deal with this leech, you have to understand that for some people, drama is a lifestyle. While it may be true that they have problems, even a ton of problems, if you're always the one that rescues them, you've entered into a co-dependent relationship.

This drama usually comes from toxic friends or family – but it can also be people in your professional life - and if you don't rush in to rescue them, they turn on you.

They'll say that you're not doing enough to help them. You're not loaning them money, holding their hand, rushing over every time they call. They'll slap ugly labels on you or tear you down.

You don't have enough empathy. You're mean. You don't love them enough. How can you be so selfish? When they say negative things about you, you can begin to believe the problem is you.

Especially if you're dealing with several family members or professional acquaintances in a group who are drama leeches, it can be a big drain on you emotionally and physically.

When you're always putting out fires for others and you realize someone is leaning on you too much, put your foot down and become unavailable so that they're forced to handle things themselves – or find someone else to turn to instead of you.

Yes, they'll be frustrated in you. They may even lash out. But that's because they're not comfortable handling their own life obstacles. You don't want to enable them anymore.

The Disempowerment Leech

When your self-esteem is strong, you can speak boldly and with confidence about who you are and what you do or want from life. Disempowerment happens when others don't value what you do or what you want.

For example, for the person who wants to go to an Ivy League college, for someone else to say, "Oh they let anyone in there now" devalues your hard work and effort.

It steals your sense of accomplishment and pride. But you can also put this leech on yourself. For example, if you've always wanted to run an online crafts business and someone asks you what you want to do, if you downplay it, that can begin to deplete your self esteem.

Don't downplay your accomplishments or make light of your hard work. The problem that this leech causes with your self-esteem is that it can affect your perspective.

You can recognize if you're disempowering yourself by how you speak about yourself or your life. If you say, "I wish I could start my own business," this is a disempowering way of thinking. Instead, change that to "I am starting my own business."

The Conforming Leech

This is the leech that looks at how things have been done and doesn't see a way to do it any differently. Its strength is found in tradition, in the way that things have always been done instead of the way that things can be done better.

This leech erodes your self-esteem by insinuating that your ideas are foolish - that there's no way they'll work because no one else has ever been able to accomplish that.

You can talk yourself out of trying anything if you allow the conforming leech to dictate what you do or don't do in life. You might hear this referred to as the road not traveled.

The reason the road isn't taken and new ventures sometimes don't get off the ground is because people are afraid to stand out - afraid to run with an idea that others say can't be done or is different from the norm.

When you have an idea and you tell yourself that it's foolish or you allow others to convince you that it's foolish, your self-esteem takes a hit because you can start to believe that you're not as smart as others who've found success.

Start believing in innovation again. That's how life changes for the better. Stop putting limitations on yourself and free yourself from all of the chains that bind you.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

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