

Are You In Love With An Emotional Vampire?

How to Cope With a Draining Mate

Adapted from "Emotional Freedom: Liberate Yourself From Negative Emotions and Transform Your Life" (Three Rivers Press, 2011)

People we love can sometimes drain us the most. Our mates may not be trying to do this, but life's demands add up. For instance, at the end of a long day he or she comes home in a negative mood or is needy and overbearing. Sometimes the draining behavior may go beyond this where they become argumentative or hurtful. As a psychiatrist, I help my patients address these behaviors with their mates in a tactful loving way to find positive solutions. Learning this skill is a wonderful Valentine's Day resolution to make in February, the month of love, and throughout the year. In my book "*Emotional Freedom*" I present different types of emotional vampires and how to combat them. An emotional vampire is someone who drains your energy. How do you know if you're in love with one? The tip-off is that you often get tired around your mate and feel like taking a nap. Also after an encounter you feel sapped and they look more alive. Here I will describe the common types of emotional vampires in romantic relationships. Energy drain can be a touchy subject to bring up with your partner. However, it is essential to sensitively discuss the draining behavior so you're not in a romantic relationship that is exhausting you.

Signs that your mate may be draining you.

During or after an interaction:

- Your eyelids are heavy—you're ready for a nap
- You feel unappreciated or put down
- You glaze over when they're talking
- You walk on eggshells around certain topics
- You run to the refrigerator to stuff yourself

Here are some common types of emotional vampires in the romantic arena and how to deal with them in clearly and effectively.

Vampire 1. The Nagger

These drainers become broken records and won't let up with their requests until you act on them. Their comments include: "Did you call your mother yet? Did you get to the gym? When are you starting on your diet? They'll annoy you with scolding, nitpicking, or repetitive demands. They can be so persistent that you feel pressured and drained.

How To Protect Yourself:

Set clear limits with your mate in a kind but firm tone. For instance, Say, "Sweetheart, I love you but you are pressuring me too much. Please back off a little." Naggers often need to be gently re-trained. You may need to practice limit setting for a while to change this pattern.

Vampire 2. The Victim/Complainer

These types grate on you with their "poor-me" attitude. The world is always against them, the reason for their unhappiness. When you offer a solution to their problems they always say, "Yes, but..." You might end up dreading having the same conversations over and over again with your mate. You want to help, but his or her tales of woe overwhelm you.

How to Protect Yourself:

You can sympathize and listen briefly. Then tell your partner, " I can see you are upset, but I don't think it's constructive to keep rehashing the same issues. Let's concentrate on solutions." This approach allows you to be loving and to actively refocus the situation in a positive way.

Vampire 3. The Criticizer

These types have a sneaky way of making you feel guilty or lacking for not getting things just right. They can find fault with everything, and spot a flaw across a crowded room, then suggest how to improve yourself “for your own good.” These can be minor critiques or comments that seriously hurt your feelings.

How to Protect Yourself:

Try addressing the criticism positively, in a calm, neutral tone. Say, “I can see that you’re trying to help, but when you’re critical it’s harder for me to hear you.” Or you might want to strike a compromise. For instance, if your mate criticizes you for leaving the dishes in the sink, you can divide the task up between you. Do this with a very loving tone and attitude—I call it setting off a “love bomb” where you diffuse negativity with sweetness while offering solutions to correct the situation.

Vampire 4. The Self-Obsessed Drainer

With these types, everything becomes about them and you hardly get your needs listened to. They may downplay your feelings and interests as they steer the conversation back to them. (For extreme cases, see the description of “The Narcissist” in my previous blog).

How To Protect Yourself:

Everyone goes through self-obsessed periods, but it’s important to bring this to your mate’s attention so he or she can shift out of it quickly. You can say, “Honey, I adore listening to you, but it would make me feel loved if you also spend time listening to me too.” Most people are unaware they are becoming self-obsessed, but when you gently mention it change can occur.

Vampire 4. The Unintentional Sapper

The people closest to you often can be the most draining. There is so much to take care of everyday--your mate can add to your sense of being overwhelmed. For instance, he or she comes home after having lost a big account at work, and needs to vent frustration. You want to listen and be caring, but you’re tired too.

How to Protect Yourself:

Plan regular mini breaks from your mate (and children.) Even a brief escape can replenish you. Take a short walk, meditate in your bedroom for a few minutes, listen to music you love. Or, if your mate has a harrowing commute home from work which makes him or her cranky with you, let them take 10 minutes at home to decompress before you interact. You must negotiate your personal space with loved ones.

In relationships, it’s important for couples to respect each other’s energy needs. With your partner, it’s healthy to protect your energy too. Don’t feel guilty or restrained about using my techniques. Honoring your energy isn’t selfish. It will increase your patience and capacity to love.

About Judith Orloff

Judith Orloff MD, an Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at UCLA and intuition expert, is author of the New York Times Bestseller [Emotional Freedom: Liberate Yourself From Negative Emotions and Transform Your Life](#) (Three Rivers Press, 2011) Her other bestsellers are [Positive Energy](#), [Guide to Intuitive Healing](#), and [Second Sight](#). Dr. Orloff synthesizes the pearls of traditional medicine with cutting edge knowledge of intuition and energy medicine. She passionately believes that the future of medicine involves integrating all this wisdom to achieve emotional freedom and total wellness. www.drjudithorloff.com