

Go With the Givers

They Will Energize You

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THIS MAY BE AN OVERSIMPLIFICATION, BUT—in a sense—all the people in the world can be divided into two groups: givers and takers. Think about it. When you have spent some time with a person, there is an “aftertaste.” What kind of taste did that encounter leave you with: “good” or “bad”? Agreeable, or disagreeable?

WHY IS THAT? Well, because encounters between people are exchanges of energy. When you have a satisfying or pleasing encounter with another person, you feel good about it. Refreshed. Enhanced. Satisfied. Possibly even “uplifted,” or “empowered,” or “energized.” In other words, you have derived positive energy from the exchange.

Yes, your psychic battery “got a charge” out of the engagement. That person, by virtue of his or her personal qualities and the way he or she interacted with you, gave you something that enriched or enhanced you. Maybe it was information. Maybe it was encouragement. Perhaps a compliment. Maybe it gave you a new and better perspective on something. In any case, you somehow came away feeling better about yourself, your life your work, your relationships—whatever. That person, in that positive exchange, gave you something. Gave you a gift.

BY CONTRAST, when you have ended an exchange with a person and it leaves you with a “bad taste,” it’s almost certainly because the interaction somehow drew down some of your positive energy. You now feel less satisfied, less happy, less good about yourself and your life, more needed in ways you don’t find totally agreeable. In fact, you are less happy with yourself. You wonder why you were dumb enough to continue that exchange, because it was pulling you down—and you *knew* in your heart of hearts it was doing it! Draining your psychic battery. Taking something from you, leaving you with less than you had before the encounter.

And, of course, this was almost certainly not the first time this had happened with this individual. Every time he or she called, you knew, deep down, what the outcome would be, because once a “taker” realizes he or she can get something good from you (charge her own psychic battery by having you give from yours), that person will just keep coming back for more. Again and again—like it will never end!

THERE IS A THIRD OPTION, of course, the encounter of two people who are equally giving. This is magic. This is golden. There is a mutual giving and receiving. Looking at it practically, each person “gives and good as he gets.” Looking at it more spiritually, it suggests the “I-thou” relationship of the love and respect between equals so beautifully described by the theologian Martin Buber (*I and Thou*, Scribner’s, (1958)).

But, getting back to the “givers” and “takers,” there’s a gem of a book by Harry Browne called “How I Found Freedom in an Unfree World” (available as an ebook on www.harrybrowne.org). In the book, Harry advises each reader to critically analyze and then *ruthlessly* revise *all* his or her personal contacts. He says that the only way to be free, in terms of your dealings with other people, is to get rid of those who pull you down. People who, on balance, take more from you than they give. All they do is make you less free, by placing demands on you for something—typically some kind of support—emotional, financial, or whatever. The net effect on you, however, is always the same: you come away from the encounter feeling less free.

So Harry says, simply, ditch the down-pullers, the takers. Go with the uplifters, the givers. Seek out and relate only to people of stature, achievement, education, goodness. Sure. Sounds simple in theory. It’s relatively easy with casual acquaintances at work or in your community. But what if the taker is your spouse, or your parent? Well, if you believe Harry, you end the relationship. Harsh advice. Much more easily said than done.

BUT IN OUR WORLDS, there has to be some way for us to follow the essential idea in Harry’s basically sound advice. We can selectively “prune” expendable relationships and wean away those needy folks whose phone calls and visits drain us. And maybe we can gracefully adjust and manage contacts with family and intimate acquaintances which don’t augment us. Perhaps less frequent contacts. Or perhaps better managing the

circumstances of the contacts so that we have better control over their quality and duration. If we examine each relationship critically but creatively, we'll find ways that work for us, in our individual real-life circumstances.

IF WE CAN INCREASE THE FREQUENCY and duration of our relationships with “givers” in our daily lives, and reduce our distasteful contact with the “takers,” I’m sure we will find that we can more easily keep our psychic batteries charged—and have more pleasant aftertastes.

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