

# How to Stop Being a Victim

Two Parts: [Changing the Way You Think](#) [Changing the Way You Communicate](#)

Do you often feel as though you deserve better and that life isn't fair? Do you feel like people treat you poorly and take you for granted? You may suffer from a victim mentality, which is a mode of thinking in which you feel unhappy in life and powerless to change it.<sup>[1]</sup> Life won't always go your way, but this doesn't mean that you are a victim. By changing the way you think and behave, you can stop feeling like a victim, and start feeling more confident and happy in life.

Part  
1

## Changing the Way You Think

**1 Acknowledge and address your own anger.** Many of us unwittingly place ourselves in the victim role by denying our own anger and projecting it on to others instead.<sup>[2]</sup> When we project our anger on to others, we may unreasonably anticipate aggression from them when they've given no real signs of it. Instead of denying your emotions, experience them. Do so without labelling them good or bad, right or wrong.

- Avoid trying to rationalize your anger. To do so may only cement you further into your victimized feelings. It's okay to feel angry, but it's more healthy to let it go and move on rather than trying to rationalize it and/or act on it.<sup>[3]</sup>
- People who dwell on their anger and try to justify it will often distort the reality around them to match their thoughts, for example, by misreading other people's facial expressions to reflect what they feel as opposed to the reality of a situation.<sup>[4]</sup>

**2 Understand that the world does not owe you anything.** When we feel entitled and that the world owes us good things, we feel cheated when we don't get these things. This leads to anger and feelings of helplessness (i.e. feeling victimized).<sup>[5]</sup>

- Psychologists recommend removing words like "fair," "should," "right," and "wrong," from your vocabulary. These words suggest expectations, and when those aren't met, you feel frustrated and victimized. Release those expectations and feelings of entitlement. Nobody owes you anything.<sup>[6]</sup>
- As an example of how this might work, imagine that your best friend's parents paid for her schooling, while you had to finance your own way through school. While you struggle to repay your enormous student loan, she is able to spend her money on things like travel, clothes, a new car — she even has a much nicer apartment than you do. Rather than feeling cheated, angry, and resentful toward her, your parents, and maybe even the rest of the world, you can choose to acknowledge the anger and move on. It's great that she isn't in debt; it's not so great that you are in debt. But it's not right or wrong. And it's not fair or unfair. It just is. You will be happier and more successful in life if you just accept both the situation and your feelings about it, and move on.

**3 Identify and counter negative, self-destructive thoughts.** Such thoughts are referred to by some professionals as "the critical inner voice."<sup>[7]</sup> The critical inner voice includes self-destructive thoughts aimed at lowering your self-esteem. These thoughts come from an angry, sad place inside of you; their purpose is to keep you unhappy. All of us have a critical inner voice, but while many of us combat the voice with positive self talk, people who feel victimized believe their critical inner voice.

- Many of us are not aware of our negative thoughts, which makes it difficult to identify and counter them. When we identify these thoughts, we can address them. One way to do so is to investigate what causes you to shift from a good mood to a bad one. Keep track of what you tell yourself while you're in that state.<sup>[8]</sup>
- An example of a critical inner voice might include feelings of injustice, where you think to yourself, "This isn't fair." You may also find yourself generalizing behaviours of other people, for example, thinking "No one ever asks me how I'm doing." You may also find that you compare yourself to others, for example, asking "Why do they always get better grades than me?"<sup>[9]</sup> When you realize that you are doing this, take a moment to ask yourself why.

- For example, if your critical inner voice says “No one ever listens to what I have to say,” ask it, “Why do you say that?” Don’t just accept it as fact, because chances are, it isn’t. Even if it is true, the more important question needs to be directed inward so that you can identify and actively work on your negative emotions. After some reflection you might realize that the reason you feel as though nobody listens to you is because you think that you have nothing worth saying, and act accordingly (for example, speaking quietly or not at all in social situations).

**4 Take responsibility for your feelings and actions.** You are not a helpless bystander in your life. If you can change a situation that makes you unhappy or worse, do so; if you cannot change it, adapt — change the way you approach it, change your attitude.<sup>[10][11]</sup> The situation that you are in may very well be unfair or horrible, but dwelling on it won't change it. Counter passive, self-victimizing brooding with constructive action.<sup>[12]</sup>

- Related to this is the necessity to be proactive. Some situations are unavoidable, but by being proactive you can anticipate and gain some control over a situation rather than merely responding to it after it's happened. You will even find that you can prevent some undesirable things from happening — for example, you can avoid that bad test score by studying and seeking the necessary help beforehand.

**5 Write in a journal every day.** Maintaining a daily journal will not only help you keep track of your moods and feelings; it will also help you come to terms with them. Again, do not try to justify your feelings. Use the journal to observe and adapt — to learn how to experience your feelings without being taken over by them. If you're in a situation that you want to get out of, use the journal to explore ways in which you might do that.

**6 Find something that brings you joy, and do it regularly.** The more time you spend doing things you enjoy, the less time you will have for brooding on negative things that encourage you to feel like a victim. Make a commitment to actively participating in your life rather than passively, helplessly watching it go by.

- Take dance classes, join a sports team, pick up a musical instrument, or learn a language.
- Spend more time with people who make you feel like the best version of you. If you don't know anyone like that, join a club or community of some sort (for example, an online community of like-minded film fans), and make some new friends.

**7 Adopt a healthy lifestyle that includes exercise and eating well.** Part of taking control of your feelings and emotions includes taking care of your body. Regular exercise will help you release stress and gain confidence. A healthy diet will help regulate your moods — not to mention, it's much easier to get in touch with your emotions when you're not riding the highs and lows brought on by a poor diet.

**8 Be kind to yourself.** It will take time to adopt the habits that are necessary to gaining control over your life and learning to stop being a victim. Don't make yourself feel worse by getting angry when you find that you're falling back into the victim mentality. Just take a deep breath, forgive yourself, and start again.

## Part 2 Changing the Way You Communicate

**1 Be assertive.** Communicate with others in a way that lets them know your wants and needs while still respecting theirs.

- When being assertive, use “I” statements; facts rather than judgments; take ownership of your thoughts and feelings; and make clear, direct requests rather than phrasing them as questions to which people can respond “no.”<sup>[13]</sup>
  - An example might be to say, “I have noticed that you often leave your dishes in the sink rather than putting them into the dishwasher. When I come home from work/school I get anxious when see them there, and I feel the need to clean the kitchen up before I can start making my own dinner. Let's come up with a timeframe for doing dishes that we can both live with.”
- If assertive communication is new behaviour for you, be prepared for people who know you to be confused by the change. It may be helpful to explain to them that you are trying to change the way that you

communicate.<sup>[14]</sup>

**2 Set clear boundaries.** Part of being assertive means **setting clear boundaries**. The purpose of setting these is to protect yourself and also to give others a clear idea of what you are and are not willing to put up with.

- An example of setting a boundary might be, with an alcoholic relative, to tell them that you enjoy their company, but you do not like the way that they behave when they are drunk; as a result, if they call you or come over when they are drunk, you will hang up on them or not let them into your house.

**3 Exude confidence.** Exuding confidence is largely about **body language**. When communicating with someone, some key things that you can do to appear confident include maintaining **good posture**, making eye contact, and being calm and positive.

- When standing, good posture means keeping your shoulders straight, back and relaxed, your abdomen pulled in, your feet hip distance apart, your weight balanced evenly on both feet, and your hands hanging naturally at your sides. In addition, you'll have a gentle bend to your knees (don't lock them), and your head will be balanced on your neck, not tilted forward, back, or to the side.<sup>[15]</sup>
- Assertive body language includes facing the person to whom you are speaking; standing or sitting tall; avoiding dismissive gestures such as rolling your eyes or waving your hand as if to wave their response away; staying serious but pleasant; and maintaining a calm and non-abrasive tone of voice.<sup>[16]</sup>
- Mirroring the other person can help them feel more comfortable and may create a better environment for communication.<sup>[17]</sup>

**4 Know the difference between empathy and sympathy, and avoid sympathy.** To empathize with someone is to understand and share their feelings; to sympathize with them is to feel pity and sorrow for them.<sup>[18]</sup> Expressing or eliciting sympathetic responses only reinforces victimized thinking.<sup>[19]</sup>

- When you seek or give sympathy, you are seeking/giving pity. You might find that when expressing your problems, you encourage people to feel sorry for you by emphasizing how powerless you are in the situation. You might find that they offer solutions and/or even try to rescue you. The desire to rescue someone usually comes from a good place, but it also tells the person you seek to rescue that you don't believe they can help themselves. A sympathetic response to a complaint might be, "I feel so sorry for you. Have you tried XYZ?"<sup>[20]</sup>
- When you seek or give empathy, you are seeking/giving support. Someone who offers empathy offers understanding without pity. A person who empathizes with you shares in your emotions but believes that you can help yourself. An example of an empathetic response to a complaint might be, "I can imagine how difficult this must be for you. What do you need right now?"<sup>[21]</sup>
- When we act helpless and seek sympathy, we place ourselves in the position of victim and we ask others to be our rescuers. This is unfair both to ourselves and our would-be rescuers. An empathetic approach emphasizes mutual respect and the belief that we care about each other but know that we are capable of taking care of ourselves.

**5 Breathe.** If you're feeling angry, stressed out, anxious, or otherwise upset in some way, take a moment to calm yourself through breathing. Breathe in deeply through your nose, thinking of your breath as inflating your stomach, rather than your chest.

Can you answer these readers' questions?

 Refresh

On **How to Change Your Name in South Carolina**, a reader asks:

How do I do a name change for a minor without the father being on the birth certificate?

Your answer...

Reply

---

On **How to Write Standard Code in C++**, a reader asks:

How can I write a program in C++ that will accept the name of five metals and display their symbols?

Your answer...

Reply

---

On **How to Clean a Dryer Drum**, a reader asks:

How can I remove a black film from the drum of my dryer after someone placed car floor mats in it and the backing disintegrated?

Your answer...

Reply

## Warnings

- If you are in an abusive domestic relationship, please seriously consider seeking help. For more information, see [How to Deal with Emotional Abuse](#).
- If you are in any other situation that puts your life at risk, please consider seeking help from the appropriate authorities.

## Sources and Citations

1. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-human-experience/201304/how-stop-playing-the-victim-game>
2. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-human-experience/201304/how-stop-playing-the-victim-game>
3. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-human-experience/201304/how-stop-playing-the-victim-game>

Show more... (18)