

THE SET FREE LIFE

The Energy Gremlins

I've once again had the opportunity to spend time with the exceptional Alan Weiss, world-class consultant, author, instructor, the consultant's consultant. Nearly a hundred of us in his Mentor Program met in Las Vegas for two days of wisdom, sharing business challenges and successes, and discussing the importance of what we have to offer in the current economy. It was, as usual, fun and invigorating.

One of my favorite topics of discussion was people Alan refers to as "energy suckers." We're all familiar with these creatures; we either know one or are one, and we need to be honest with ourselves about both sides of the equation. Energy suckers may be those who never seem to have anything but a complaint on their lips. When you suggest something remedial, they tell you how it probably won't work in their situation. When you tell them how you're excited about a new venture, they urge you to not expect too much. When you say "hello," they begin a litany of every single thing going on in their lives and they don't come up for air until your time together is almost over, and then they ask, "So what's up with you?"

At work, these folks are so focused on the minutiae of tasks or projects that you can barely contain your incredulity at their ability to make the extremely simple supremely complicated. A benign request results in a six-paragraph email detailing why it can't be met, as though they take this as some sort of deeply serious foray into logistics and methods. They don't know how to respond with a gracious, "Oh, gosh, I would love to be able to do that but it's going to put a crimp in the plans we've made. What about X instead?"

Other energy suckers always want something from you but give nothing back. Or they constantly present thoroughly unsolicited advice, most often on topics about which they know absolutely nothing, have never attempted, or have attempted and failed. (Fourth

possibility: they've just begun and now feel anointed to provide high-level advice instead of waiting to see if they have any chance at being successful before sharing insights.)

What's tough about dropping these people from our lives is that they really cannot see themselves, even if we've repeatedly told them how it saps us to be in their presence. We may love them dearly, but they just don't get it, and it's demoralizing.

If you can truly ignore the consistent energy drain because you so enjoy the company of such a vacuum-powered individual, then have at it. But people will treat you as you allow them to, and even if it's a family member you hate to offend, strong training works. Tell your energy suckers that if they can't control their negative spew, you'll end the conversation and go. And then do that. No matter that you just sat down at the restaurant; the moment you hear the launch into a self-absorbed harangue, look at your watch and say, "Oh my gosh, will you look at the time! I completely forgot I have somewhere else to be." Then pick up your behind and immediately depart. Don't look back. A couple of times with that trigger—especially since the person has been forewarned—and the message is powerfully delivered. If the person can't control him or herself at all, then really, friend—move on. No point in your suffering under that cloud. Find those who instill and produce energy, make a commitment to doing the same, and see what a difference it makes in your outlook! ♣



Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her seminars on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused listeners at companies and business organizations throughout the country to rate her presentations as "the best seminar of the conference!" She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

Quick Links

Dr. Alan Weiss

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Sue@SetFreeLifeSeminars.com

www.SetFreeLifeSeminars.com

877.231.6993

Teddy Bear Says...

The Teddy Bear is not unaware of the challenges faced by the human species when everything around them



seems to speak of gloom and despair. I know you may be facing dark times or stressful circumstances, and I don't wish to minimize your suffering in any way, but Teddy Bear says *look up!*

I do not mean to suggest that all it takes to get through hard times is to look on the sunny side of life. I wish to point out, however, that when you folks feel the world is coming apart, you pull inward and hunch over. You walk like

you're facing a strong wind, and your head stays down, your eyes focused on the sidewalk in front of you. Let me tell you, though, of the sighthound's view.

We can see nearly a mile away with our sharp eyes. Some of us have up to 270 degrees of peripheral vision, and we can catch the dart of a small animal when not even looking at it directly. When we focus on our prey, our instincts put us immediately into the double-suspension gallop that has us at a full 35-45 miles per hour within three strides. These glorious talents are what made us the joy of men who through many millennia have depended upon our abilities to feed their families, and the hunting companions of royalty.

We see our desire sprinting in the distance because our heads are held high on our long necks, and it is this quality you must learn to cultivate, particularly in difficult terrain. Opportunities will be missed if your eyes are on the ground, my friends. You must keep your gaze above the crowd, scanning the distance for what seem to be only tiny flashes of movement, and create the instinctive response of springing into action to capture them. You might often find, as we do, that what seems insignificant is quite large as you catch up with it! We have tackled animals many times our size because we know how use our speed and agility to our advantage, and our handlers knew that we needed to roam freely with an elevated gaze if we were to bring home the evening's main course.

So move purposefully and look up! That tiny fleck of movement you spot could be the very thing you need to sustain you. It might even be a catch far greater than you might have imagined, an abundance you'll have to

Quotable

It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important.

*Sherlock Holmes
A Case of Identity*

Contact Sue today to learn how she can meet your business needs

Sue Thompson

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Sue@SetFreeLifeSeminars.com

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share because there's more than enough to go around. I know from personal experience that what appears trivial can actually be wonderfully substantial! (Except for cats. But that's a story for another time.) 🐾

LITTLE THINGS CAN COUNT

Remember the commercial for a cleaning stick where a guy is in an interview, explaining his qualifications, but the stain on his jacket is speaking louder than he is and the interviewer is transfixed by that stain? Sometimes, no matter how much we've dolled up for an important meeting or event, the little things we've left undone can undo us.

When we take lightly the ill fit of our clothing or the sad state of our grooming, we are putting a positive image in jeopardy. The person or people with whom we are meeting may not take notice at all—or they might, like the man in the commercial, be fixated on the flaw that says loudly and clearly, "I really don't care about looking my best for you."

Let's take a look over the next few months at common "disregards" that can wear the shine off of one's polish. Speaking of polish: make friends with your local shoe repair shop! Ladies, when you can hear the harsh sound of metal as your heels hit a hard surface, it's time for a visit. Take those shoes in at the first sound of the exposure of the metal post in your high heels. Don't wait until the leather is peeling up from the bottom of the heel because you've worn off the tip. Gentleman, if one side of your heel is worn down to an obvious slant, take them in for a new application.

Your repair shop can keep your favorite shoes looking great for a long time. I recently took a beloved pair of black patent leather stilettos to the shop because I'd somehow managed to make cuts in several places along the heel. Where others advised me to use a black marker on the spots, I knew that would look tacky and tasteless. To my delight, the shop was skilled in completely recovering the heel with new leather, and the shoes look brand new! There are also repair services that can be found on the Web to which you can send your shoes, notably [B. Nelson Shoes](#) in New York.

And friends—*polish*. You may think others are not looking, but consider the person behind you on an elevator or the manager walking behind you into a restaurant. Use a streak remover. If nothing else, when putting away your shoes at the end of the day, wipe them with a leather-cleaning cloth or brush the suede. Shoes are often forgotten in the total good grooming category. There is little worse than a great suit with an appalling pair of uncared-for shoes.

Next month: repair your clothing! 🧦