

FRIENDSHIP SABOTEURS

INTRODUCTION

As you have read in Chapter 7 of “The Self-Worth Safari”, friends play a significant role in developing our sense of self. Friends are often the mirrors by which we see ourselves. However, those mirrors can frequently be distorted by our own inner dialogue. For example:

- A friend’s throw-away remark – which to them seemed harmless, or just a bit of fun – can wound us deeply or make us angry;
- We don’t want to admit something to ourselves, so we don’t tell our closest friends about it;
- You give advice or opinion, meant with love and with the other’s best interests at heart; but the other person just gets annoyed.

In all three cases, your self-worth is implicated. Sure, the other person’s self-worth is probably involved, too; but we are focusing here on *your* self-worth, not the other person’s.

This resource is divided into two parts. The first part attempts to take stock of the **inner voices** that can distort the mirror of friendship – even before any word gets uttered or action taken. The second part looks at typical **behaviours** that cause a person’s self-worth to be triggered or affected.

PART I: INNER VOICES

There are many inner dialogues that may cast a shadow over the experience of friendship. The list that follows is far from exhaustive. However, it identifies some of the most common self-worth voices that impact how we interact with our friends. Notice how the effects can trigger *their* self-worth issues, too! On these occasions, a whole lot of drama can ensue.

Inner voice	Possible effects on friendship
“I am valued as a problem-solver”	Giving advice that was not asked for, interfering; Making assessments or judgements (even positive ones!) that others find irritating
“I must not make mistakes”	Arguing over trifles to prove oneself right; Inability to “move on”; Not sharing problems in case I “get it wrong” or seem diminished or vulnerable
“I cannot trust people”	Checking up / controlling Devising Plan B, C and D Inability to commit or make decisions
“I’m afraid of being laughed at, mocked”	Not showing up Getting angry when others are having fun Becoming silently resentful
“I’m stupid”	Not sharing opinion or experience Allowing others to interrupt or talk over me Exerting power in other ways e.g. money, control
“I’m ugly”	Withdrawal from social events or activities Criticising others for being “dumb” Sarcastic wit

"Things always go wrong"	Not trusting people Being melancholic, resigned to circumstance Not making plans, avoiding responsibility for self
"I am a failure"	Ranting against society, business, establishment Disparaging successful people Gossip (to take others down)
"Life is hard"	Difficulty having fun and letting go Envy or criticism of people who appear carefree Always planning for the worst
"I got a raw deal"	Self-pity, resentment against life Envy or jealousy of others Preoccupied with the past, not living in the present
"The world is dangerous"	Not trying new activities or initiatives Fear of travel Isolating

Are there others that apply to you? What is the effect?

Fortunately, you have the power to reverse these inner narratives, using the shifts described in "The Self-Worth Safari". For example:

Inner voice	Possible effects on friendship
"I am a friend to myself in any situation"	Free to explore new people, activities Dropping assessments and judgements (of self and others) that are unnecessary
"I am interested, vs. trying to be interesting"	Active listening, less advice-giving Curiosity about their experience (and what makes them tick), discovery of new worlds More lightness and joy in social settings
"I am enough"	Ability to drop discussions (and people) that sap my energy No need to prove anything to anyone (even to me!) More energy and freedom

Feel free to add yours here:

PART II: BEHAVIOURS THAT SABOTAGE FRIENDSHIP

As you have already gathered, many of the behaviours that are problematical for friendship stem from an inner voice of “not enough-ness”. This is even true of those people who come across as confident and arrogant; where a haughty, external mask often hides a struggle with self-worth within.

Here is a list of some of the most common sabotaging behaviours. Some of these appeared on Page 172 of “The Self-Worth Safari”. There are many others, which you can add from your own day-to-day experience.

1. Criticising people. (Or even telling them what they could do better, which is often just “sophisticated criticism”.)
2. Gossiping about people not present. How safe do you feel with people like that?
3. Perfectionism: where people see the flaw in everything, without appreciating what’s good about it. (And why do they need to make either assessment?)
4. Envy or jealousy of others.
5. Joy-killing. Telling stories of tragedy or misfortune just when others are having fun.
6. Inability to join-in and let go. Staying aloof, often pointedly so.
7. Needing to dominate the conversation: to comment on everything that has been said (if indeed others can get a word in edgeways, at all!)
8. Need to control, e.g. exerting control by changing plans at the last minute.
9. Flakiness, inability to keep promises and show up. Often linked with...
10. Over-promising, saying Yes to everything and then not able to meet commitments.
11. Fixing other people or interfering in their lives, without being asked.
12. Being indifferent, not being interested, or worse still faking interest in others.
13. Busy-ness: having no time for others, interrupting them and/or hurrying off.
14. Blaming: parents, education, the boss, society, men/women, migrants... resentful ranting in all its forms.

15. Playing the martyr or the victim.
16. Sarcastic wit, carrying an undertone of anger or resentment.
17. Breaking confidences, telling other people's private stories without their permission.
18. Advising others how they should live their lives (career, nutrition, relationships, home etc), without being asked (and without seeking their consent).
19. Flattery, vague praise or compliments: often used as a subtle power game, in order to assert the giver's power to do so.
20. Being physically present, but mentally absent: clearly thinking about something else. (Or of course, paying more attention to one's smartphone.)
21. Seizing every opportunity to bring the conversation back to oneself and/or one's favourite topic(s) of conversation.
22. Talking non-stop.
23. Interrupting others.
24. Bottling up issues and not discussing them.
25. Retaliating for what others have said or done (often for things the other is not aware of).
26. Taking everything personally. It helps to remember that what others say and do usually has more to do with their self-worth.... Do you really have to make this about yours? 😊

As self-worth grows, many of these behaviours naturally disappear. An even greater benefit is the discovery that you do not have to get entangled in the self-worth issues of other people. This creates a real sense of freedom: you can be there for your friends without feeling obligated to get involved in unnecessary drama. When necessary, you can set boundaries – see Chapter 14 of “The Self-Worth Safari”. You can enjoy the beauty of your garden, without feeling compelled to obsess about the weeding!