

Mother Superior Meets the Sociopath: Not A Love Story

Here is an example of one of the most common Giver/Taker patterns you see in codependent relationships.

In this pattern, the Giver gives because of some form of unconscious gain (feels good, is needy, reinforced from a very young age, etc.) which attracts Takers. This initially is a natural fit because Givers like to give and Takers like to take. In this dynamic, the Giver initially gives "freely" for a time, but this "freely" giving is based on an imaginary contract of Fairness that they believe the Taker has signed. However, the Takers are relatively unaware of such contracts and never agreed to this Fairness contract

As the Giver begins giving, the Taker manages to give back in small and/or superficial ways such as praising, thanking, feigning a sense of dependence, etc. so that the Giver will continue to give. This takes place for some time until the Giver starts to feel a growing imbalance between what they are giving and what they are getting in return. At this point, Givers tend to shift towards a Matching perspective and start keeping track and expecting some form of reciprocity. Because Givers tend to be passive in their communication styles, they will try to communicate with subtle hints and other indirect manners, hoping that the Taker (who is unconscious of being a Taker) will start to acknowledge/honor the imaginary Fairness Contract which the Taker didn't sign and is largely unaware of.

When Takers fails to pick up these subtle requests, the Givers will tend to use a more direct means of communication (high emotion, criticism, tit for tat comparisons, etc.) with the Taker, hoping that the Taker will see the imbalance and respond towards the Fairness Contract. However, due to the Taker's unconscious tendencies and distortions, he/she honestly believes the Giver's perception is distorted and responds with comments like "You're being selfish," "Why do you need to keep track of things," "Well, I did this one thing for you and now you are unappreciative." These responses tend to be temporarily effective because Givers tend to be prone to guilt and other forms of emotional manipulation. However, as the imbalance continues to build and because subtle and direct forms of communication were ineffective, the Giver starts stuffing emotions and building resentment.

Resentment tends to contaminate all parts of a relationship and the Giver starts looking for things to further support his/her case of unfairness and to minimize anything counter to his/her beliefs, creating the resentment. Eventually, the resentment leads to passive-aggressive behavior on the Givers part. The Giver does this in an attempt to establish a sense of Fairness even while continuing to give, but reducing the amount, withholding, and increasing the hidden and not-so hidden costs of the equation with the Taker. The Taker tends to be quite confused by this passive-aggressive behavior and feels like the victim of the Giver's upset emotions, withholding, and other passive aggressive responses. Turning things around again on the Giver, the Taker makes things appear that they are the victims and the ones being hurt. After a painful period of time, for both individuals, things usually erupt to the point beyond repair where one of them decides to leave and enter into the exact same pattern with another person that fits their co-dependent pattern. A healthier response would be for him/her to become more aware of the pattern, moves more towards an assertive and sharing position, and avoids getting in another relationship with another Giver or Taker.

How to Identify Takers and Advice for Givers

How to identify takers

- Be aware of your past patterns with Takers and learn from it. Take your time, listen to your gut.
- Divide something up (like a piece of pie) where one piece is noticeably bigger than the other and let them go first in choosing.
- Ask them to name off three people that they really admire and what is it about them that they like.
- Ask them if they won 10 million dollars what they would do with it.
- Say no to a request and see how they respond. If they have a problem with you saying no, then that is pointing out a bigger problem.
- Ask the person what he/she wants to do and pay attention to if they ever reciprocate.
- Listen.... Are the stories always about them or someone or something greater. Does the person say I and me most of the time or we, us, and you?

- Watch how they treat people who are subordinate versus those who are superior?

TAKERS

- Don't like to be told No
- Like to get their way
- Use emotions to manipulate others – particularly anger, guilt, disappointment, and pouting
- Tend to blame others for failures and short comings
- Lack of insight and accountability in things going wrong and over owning accountability when they go right.
- Lack empathy
- Asks for lots of "favors"
- Afraid of not having or being enough
- World is inherently unfair and unsafe so they are justified in taking
- Doesn't trust in self or others... self-protected and self-invested
- Isolated with limited friends because of burning bridges (unless brings something of value to the table- charisma, funny, wealth, etc.)

GIVERS

- Unconsciously give to get. Most givers are highly unaware that they are not as altruistic as they believe.
- View themselves as being better than others or as victims
- Difficulty saying no.
- Over apologize
- Over agree
- Rarely ask for help or favors and dislike owing people anything
- Set themselves up so that they don't need help, but resent that no one seems to help them.
- Stuff emotions
- Passive
- Resentful
- Tend to please and give for secondary gains such as:
 - Sense of value or identity
 - Safety
 - Inclusion
 - Superiority
 - Don't know what they want, who they are, and how to make decisions in life because they have been reliant on others to do it for them.

Advice to Givers

- Start saying No
- Read up on fundamental human rights so that you know yours and can assert them
- Stop saying I'm sorry when you haven't done anything wrong
- Stop saying "Ya," "Uh, huh," "I don't know," and "your right" so regularly. Givers say these very regularly, even before the other person has finished their thought to stay in high levels of perceived agreement and acceptance. Think for yourself before responding in these habitual responses.
- Learn your wants and preferences and start sharing them. Stop saying "What would you like" and start honoring your own opinions and preferences.
- Listen to your gut and start speaking and acting from it. Your intuition has been telling you when things have been out of balance and when you are being used.
- Learn about assertiveness: What are your rights, how to communicate assertively, what to expect from others, etc.
- Test the waters early in relationships and pay attention to how the other responds to identify if they are likely a Giver, Taker, Matcher, or Sharer. How did the other person respond in their longer term relationships? What was wrong with it? Takers will tend to be unable to share what they contributed to the breakup.

Advice to Takers

I didn't spend time on this because I felt that a taker would never be interested in reading this stuff. But, if you are a taker and would like to know, please email me and ask me to finish this part of the article.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: David Cummins, PhD is a licensed psychologist practicing in Boise, ID. Feel free to contact him if you have any thoughts you would like to share. You can read more of his life changing and mind bending blog posts at www.davidcummins.net