

POSITIVE ENERGY: HOW TO BUILD VITALITY AND STOP ENERGY VAMPIRES FROM DRAINING YOU

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I learned to honor my energy needs the hard way. As a psychiatrist who specializes in intuition I knew how important it was to listen to my body. Yet still I'd vacillate between intense weeks of speaking tours to bouts of utter exhaustion at home. I couldn't turn down "irresistible" opportunities. Here was my dilemma--I trusted my intuition, and was committed to living by it. But I had a blind spot: Although I was quite successful at helping others at trusting intuition and leading high energy lives I was ignoring my own energy crises. Finally my fatigue was so profound I had to change.

I know first hand how important it is for us to cherish our precious energy so we don't compromise our capacity for passion. I now believe that the most profound transformations can only take place only on an energetic level. I've met many patients who've spent much time and money on talk therapy hoping that intellectual insights will bring emotional freedom, but they're disappointed. As much as I love the linear mind, my approach, which I call "Energy Psychiatry," goes further to also facilitate a conscious rebuilding of a subtle energies, the most basic life force in each of us.

Do You Get Drained By Other People's Energy?

Our bodies are made of flesh and blood, but they're also composed of energy fields—though sadly I wasn't taught this in medical school. Each day we encounter a wide range of energies, both positive and negative. Positive energy includes compassion, courage, forgiveness, and faith. Negative energy includes fear, anger, hopelessness, and shame. We need to be experts at dealing with energy so we don't get demolished by draining situations or people who're energy vampires.

Like me you may be an intuitive empath, someone who's so sensitive to energy you pick it up but you're also drained by it. This goes way beyond feeling sympathy for a distraught friend—we actually take on their pain either emotionally or physically. To cope we take refuge in solitude. We empaths are so attuned to others that we can feel what's going on inside of them. This can put us on energy overload and aggravate everything from chronic fatigue to overeating.

Growing up, my girlfriends couldn't wait to hit the malls, but I dreaded them. I always felt overwhelmed, exhausted around crowds, though I was clueless why. "What's the matter?" friends would say, shooting me the weirdest looks. All I knew was that crowded places and I just didn't mix. I'd go there feeling fine but leave nervous, depressed, or with some new ache or pain. Unsuspectingly, I was a gigantic sponge, absorbing the energy of people around me.

Thank goodness, as my intuition matured, I realized I had intuitive empathy. Once I learned to protect my energy, empathy has become a gift enhancing my compassion. Here's how empathy works: the more people per square foot, the more our energy fields intersect--thus the tendency to become overloaded in high-density areas. This aspect of intuition is the most neglected.

Empaths, unintentionally, can make even a good doctor's life hell. They manifest so many "unexplained" symptoms, that frustrated physicians write them off as hypochondriacs. Empaths

are notoriously misdiagnosed. Patients have come to me with obesity who've failed diets because they needed strategies other than eating to protect themselves from negative energy. Others were labeled "agoraphobic" or with "panic disorder," having received only minor relief from traditional treatments. Some were nearly house-bound. They'd all say, "I dislike crowded places where there's no quick escape. Forget department stores, busy streets, elevators, tunnels. I just avoid them." Sounded very familiar. So I decided to take a history of how these people processed subtle energy in the world, something all health professionals must be trained to assess. Voila! I found many were undiagnosed empaths. For me, this changed everything. My job as a physician then became teaching my patients to center themselves and protect their energy.

SIDE BAR

How do you know if you're an empath? What are the signs?

Quiz: Are You an Intuitive Empath?

Ask yourself:

- *Have you ever sat next to someone at a dinner who seems pleasant, but suddenly you're nauseous, have a headache, or feel drained?
- *Are you uncomfortable in crowds, even go out of your way to avoid them?
- *Do you get easily over-stimulated by people or prefer being alone?
- *When someone is in pain, do you start feeling it too ?
- *Do I overeat around people I'm uncomfortable with?

If you've answered "yes" to one or more questions, it's likely you have experienced intuitive empathy. Responding "yes" to every question indicates empathy is draining your energy.

A Survival Guide to Protect Yourself from Energy Vampires.

You don't have to be an empath to experience the fang marks of an energy vampire, though empaths are often hit the hardest. Relationships are always an energy exchange. To stay feeling our best, we must ask ourselves: Who gives us energy? Who saps it? It's important to be surrounded by supportive, heart-centered people who make us feel safe and secure. It's equally important to pinpoint the energy vampires, who, whether they intend to or not, leech our energy.

Positive energy in others can be rejuvenative. For instance, you're nervous about a job interview, but the minute you meet your prospective boss you relax. He's so calm and welcoming, you calm down too. Or perhaps you have a good friend around whom you always feel loved. These are energy-givers, those we must gravitate towards.

In contrast, energy vampires exude negative energy that drains. Vampires range from the intentionally malicious ones to those who are oblivious to their effect. Some are overbearing and obnoxious; others are friendly and charming. For example, you're at a party talking to a perfectly nice person, but suddenly you're nauseous or weak. Or how about the co-worker who drones on about how she broke up with her boyfriend for the tenth time? Eventually, she feels better, but you're spent. The bottom line is that on a subtle energy level these people suck you dry.

There are many types of vampires to watch out for. The main ones I stress in my book are the Drama Queen who wears you out with her dramas; The Sob Sister, who whines all the time; The Blamer, who cuts you down with criticism and The Go-For-The-Carotid type who purposely cuts you down without any respect for your feelings. Keep an eye out for these types so you're aware of their methods, and stop them from draining you.

Strategies for Dealing With Energy Vampires

1. Take an inventory of people in your life who give energy, and people who drain. Specifically identify the energy vampires, and begin to evaluate ones you'd like to limit contact with or eliminate. Plan at least one complete afternoon with people who give off positive energy and avoid drainers. Notice how this beneficially affects your physical and emotional well-being.

2. Set Clear Boundaries. It's crucial to limit the time you spend discussing a vampire's gripes. When approaching her, remember: the difference between being a bitch and setting boundaries is attitude. Instead of saying, "You're selfish and self-obsessed, I can't take you anymore," which a part of you likely feels, take a breath and shift to your heart.

3. Meditate. Sitting in meditation is a life-line to your center, to the earth. It will ground you when you've been struck by a vampire. By calming the mind, you can re-align with your essence. Close your eyes. Focus on your breath. Then gently extend your awareness downward to strata, bedrock, minerals, and soil. From the base of your spine begin to feel a continuity with the earth's core. Picture having a long tail that roots in that center. Allow the earth's energy to infuse your body and stabilize you. If you meditate for five minutes or an hour this is sacred time.

4. Walk away. If you feel your energy being zapped don't hesitate to politely excuse yourself from a killing conversation. Move at least twenty feet from the person, outside the range of his or her energy field. "I have to go to the bathroom" is a foolproof line. Most people are oblivious to how their energy impacts others. For years, reluctant to hurt anyone's feelings, I needlessly endured these types of situations and suffered. How many of us are so loathe to appear rude that a raving maniac can be right in our face, and still we don't budge for fear of offending? In a spot, physically removing yourself is a sure quick solution.

5. Build an energy shield around you. When you're with vampires you can't get away from visualize a protective shield of white light surrounding every inch of you. This lets positive energy in, but keeps negative energy out—particularly efficient for vampires at family dinners or social events where you're trapped.

I hope I've inspired you to be more fierce about asserting your energy needs. Never put yourself down as being "overly sensitive." Sensitivity is an asset as long as you learn how to protect yourself from negative vibes. Understanding how you react energetically in the world is particularly important if you're chronically tired and want to build vitality. Knowledge is power. Meeting your energy needs can balance mind, body, and spirit to create a vibrant life.

Judith Orloff, MD is a psychiatrist and energy expert in Los Angeles. This article is excerpted from her new book, *Positive Energy: Ten Extraordinary Prescriptions for Transforming Fatigue, Stress, and Fear into Vibrance, Strength, and Love* (Three Rivers Press, 2005). She's also written the bestsellers *Guide to Intuitive Healing* and *Second Sight*. Dr. Orloff is an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at UCLA and an international workshop leader. For more information visit www.drjudithorloff.com

Dr. Orloff is giving a special weekend workshop in Rye Town, NY Sept 30-October 1 "The Power of Intuition and Energy to Heal." To enroll visit info@theconferenceworks.com 800-395-8445 X154 For more

information on Dr. Orloff's books and workshop schedule visit
www.drjudithorloff.com.

Dr. Orloff's Tips for Keeping Your Positive Energy High

1. In crowds or stressful situations take a few deep breaths to exhale negative energy from your body
2. Meditate daily to center yourself—visualize roots going through you and planting firmly in the ground
3. Take daily baths or showers to wash off negative vibes. Water is a potent purifier and can get rid of the slimiest of energies.
4. Burn sage in a room to purify left over negative vibes. Sage is an ancient purifier. (Many of my patients who work in the entertainment industry use this technique to clear the energy in the room after back-to-back pitch meetings in their office.)
5. Eliminate energy vampires from your life