

BMW Driven to Distraction

"My days of whining and complaining about others have come to an end. Nothing is easier than fault finding." - Og Mandino

BMW - no, not the car.
BMW bitching, moaning and whining.

How often are you driven to distraction, taken off your game or lose your focus - at work, at home, at play or in relationship - due to someone's continual venting whining, complaining, nit-picking and fault finding? How often do you choose to allow, to enable, someone to suck your time and energy resulting in your missing a deadline, decreasing your productivity, messing up on an assignment or interfering with your pleasure - because consciously or unconsciously you're driven by some internal mantra that says, "I'm your friend and I need to be there for you?"

Do you enable BMW-ers because you feel that's what a good leader, manager, co-worker, friend, partner or spouse is supposed to do? Do you enable these folks again and again even though it stresses you out or leads to passive-aggressive behavior on your part?

So, here's the deal. MBW-ers always feel better after they've had the opportunity to off-load their stuff on to you. MBW-ers always feel better when they commandeer you to carry their load. Why wouldn't they?

The important question here is, "How does your taking on their stuff, again and again, help you!?" "How does their sleeping better, feeling better support your experiencing well-be-ing?" In a word, it doesn't. You don't sleep better, feel better, become more productive, or experience a heightened sense of well-be-ing.

What actually happens over time is you begin to experience overwhelm, fogginess, confusion, upset, resentment and exhaustion - mentally, physically and emotionally.

In reality, if you ask, "How is his/her life changing for the better as a result of my enabling their BMW-ing," the answer (if we're being honest, sincere and self-responsible) is in all likelihood, "not at all."

Venting is an addiction.

Most BMW-ers are very good at it. Most BMW-ers are addicted to their venting. It's their drug of choice. Like most addicts, the capacity they lack is self-responsibility. BMW-ing is the venter's way of avoiding taking responsibility for their life, for their feelings - at work, at home, at play and in relationship.

The venter's strategy is denial - choosing to not invest time exploring their state in life. BMW-ers have no interest in exploring or admitting their role in creating upset or conflict. They have no interest in exploring the root causes of their pain and suffering. Venters hardly ever come to you and ask for support in gaining clarity about steps they can take to clean up their messes, become more mature in how they relate to life and living, learn what's underneath their anger and anxiety. That's what addicts are good at - denial when it comes to self-awareness, self-management and self-actualization. BMW-ers are risk averse when it comes to change and forwarding the action of their lives. Dumping - that's their juice.

Most folks - if they're not enablers and don't thrive on dysfunctional relationships - will admit, deep down, their supporting BMWs' venting does not work for them or for the venters. Most normal, healthy human beings have a felt sense that supporting BMW-ers is self-sabotaging, yet, are unsure as to what to do. They're conflicted by wanting to be a good friend and not knowing how to deal with a venter.

Responding to a BMW-er

So, here's a suggestion: how about, "Well, (name of friend and/or colleague), I know my listening to you again and again makes you feel better for a while. But, honestly, I end up feeling worse. I like (love/admire/respect/honor) you and I want to be supportive; but in my perspective it seems that your venting is not getting you anywhere; rather, your venting is an addiction like sugar or alcohol that gives you a momentary sense of feeling better but in reality you are not taking responsibility for (the issue.) If you want support in working to find solutions, I'm happy to help, but I don't want to be on the other end of your venting any more." This is *your* opportunity to be honest, sincere and self-responsible.

The Buddhist monk, Pema Chodrun, likens enabling to "idiot compassion" - supporting others to your own detriment. An honest and self-responsible response to a BMW-er takes inner strength, courage, empathy, self-love and compassion for the other person. The question is, "Can you choose to respond in an honest, sincere and self-responsible way to a venter?" Even if the BMW-er chooses to become angry or resentful?

It's all about the truth.

The truth is, most folks balk when someone calls them on their stuff, on their addictions, and refuses to enable them any longer. So, are you willing to face their upset, to allow them to be mad at you?

The truth is, listening to MBW-ers spew their stuff and vent is not loving yourself, and, frankly, is not loving to them. What is loving and compassionate is for you to stop enabling their addiction, even if that's tough for them to hear.

The truth is, you may actually lose a friend or colleague if you call them on their stuff. How does that resonate with you?

The truth is, friendship - honest, conscious and healthy relationships - is a two-way street. Many BMW-ers drive on one-way streets using you for their selfish gain with no regard for you as a friend, colleague or partner. They drive through life at work, at home, at play and in relationship - with a blurred vision.

The truth is, if your friend, the venter, pulls their friendship because "you don't want to listen to me," there never was a friendship - a dysfunctional relationship with a "victim," but not a friendship.

So, what do you think? Do you choose to hang on and enable an MBW-er in a co-dependent and unhealthy relationship, or engage with real and true friends, colleagues and partners with whom you can learn and grow, extending mutual support and respect to one another?

"Take your life in your own hands and see what happens? A terrible thing: no one to blame." - Erica Jong

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- Are you the "go-to" person others seek out to dump and vent? If so, why do you think this is so?
- Do you "get something" from others seeking you out to vent? Are you addicted to others' venting?
- Do you encourage and support others to explore solutions for their issues rather than simply allowing them to vent?
- Do you feel stressed by others' venting? If so, is this OK? Do you put up with it? Why?
- Are you a venter? What would friends, colleagues or your partner say?
- Are you uncomfortable confronting others about their venting. Can you tell them you won't passively listen to their venting?
- If you are a BMW-er, what does venting get you? How has venting honestly changed your life for the better?
- Do you prefer to vent rather than explore real solutions to your life's challenges?

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