

Reclaim your power!

When you own your personal power, you have a choice: to either be a victim or to take responsibility for your life. Lisa Phillips shows you how.

MANY of us, consciously or unconsciously, give our power away to other people. Instead of recognising that we always have a choice, we keep ourselves stuck by blaming other people or situations for the way we feel or how our lives have turned out. Other ways you might give away your power include: allowing other people to dump a 'guilt trip' on you; taking responsibility for other people's problems; going against your own best interests; allowing other

block you from moving forward, you are also choosing to give your power away.

Reclaim your right

I like to think that personal power is like a big bus adventure: you can choose to sit in the driver's seat of your life, going to places that make you happy, and generally driving your life in the direction you want to go - or you can choose to give your power or driver's seat over to another person, allowing them to influence how you behave, where you go and ultimately, how happy you are. Think about your life as it currently stands: are you driving your own bus or are you sitting in the back seat allowing other people to take control? To what or whom have you given your power? Are you going to continue to feel powerless or will you do something about it?

There are many ways you can start taking back your personal power. First, notice how regularly you relinquish your power and recognise that most of the time it really doesn't feel good in your body, either. In times when I feel I have given away my power, I ask myself, "What three things do I need to do right now that will allow me to take back my power?" These are often not huge actions, just little mindset changes or small steps. Another great way to reclaim your personal power is to begin to take a few seconds' breathing space before reacting or agreeing to do something. In these few seconds, you can ask yourself: Am I choosing to give my power away and do something that is not in my best interest? Am I doing what I want to do or what other people want me to do? What needs to happen right now for me to reclaim my power?

people to control, manipulate or abuse you; complaining about things but doing nothing to change them; always blaming other people for what is happening in your life.

People who choose to give away their power will often use statements such as: "It is my parents' fault that I have no confidence"; "I can't go out for a night out; my partner wouldn't like it"; or "If only I could lose more weight, I would feel much happier." In fact, at any given time you have a choice about how you react to, or feel about any situation. For example, you can continue to blame your parents for the programming you received as a child or you can choose to take responsibility and do something positive about it. Every time you allow negative feelings, fears or other people's opinions to

Reclaiming and owning your personal power is about recognising that nothing and no one can actually control or influence you - unless you allow them to.

Top tips

- Don't allow other people to have an unhealthy level of influence and control in your life.
- Remind yourself that getting angry and resentful at someone else will not change a thing.
- Recognise that if someone is critical towards you, you don't have to believe what they say.
- Believe that a situation will change, when you change.

Case study: Mary's mum

Ever since Mary was small, her mum had criticised her appearance and weight. As an adult, after visiting her mum, Mary often felt upset and resentful, but she never felt she could do anything about it, so the pattern continued. To whom has Mary given her power? Her mum! Rather than speaking up, Mary has chosen to hand her power over. So, it is Mary who ends up upset and her mother really has no idea of the hurt she has caused.

It may seem easier for Mary just to wish her mother would change, but unfortunately we can't change other people. If you are sitting around waiting for something to change in order for you to feel better, you have given your power away to someone else - and you may have a long wait! The fact is, Mary's mother may never change. So, rather than wishing for this to occur, Mary could make a conscious decision to take back her power by:

- Being assertive and telling her mother about how this behaviour is affecting her.
- Requesting that her mother stop her critical attitude.
- Putting some distance between herself and her mother for a while.
- Ignoring her mother's comments.
- Choosing not to allow the critical comments to upset her so much.
- Working on her own self-confidence so the comments don't bother her any more.

Can you see that there is always a choice, and any of the above options would mean that Mary is choosing to take responsibility for her own life and take back her power?