

How to Overcome Martyr Syndrome

<http://www.wikihow.com/Overcome-Martyr-Syndrome>

Are you tired of living with feelings of suffering, being overwhelmed and helplessness? You may have martyr syndrome. Martyr syndrome is a term that describes people who use self-sacrifice and suffering to control or manipulate their environment. It frequently includes being stuck in a victim mentality with resulting feelings of helplessness.

Stop waiting for the mind-reader. If other people were going to understand that you didn't want more to do, they would have understood by now.

- Wishful thinking never solves the problem.
- Good communication skills involve both speaking and listening. It's necessary to find out if the other person is aware how you feel, and what you want and expect.
- It's also necessary that they have a chance to express what it is that they want and expect.
- A simple conversation can clear up a big misunderstanding.
- It's also possible that the other person doesn't want the same thing you want, or worse (for you), doesn't care.
- It's important to know how things really are so you can deal with reality instead of some fantasized misunderstanding.
- You need to know where they stand so you can act accordingly.
- Even if the other person does not care about the issue as much as you do, you can probably negotiate a better situation than you currently have.

Learn to set effective boundaries. Every time you say yes when you mean no, you commit an act of self betrayal.

- You can learn to politely and respectfully decline to do what people ask you do.
- Before you agree to someone's request, ask yourself if you really want to do what they're asking, and consider how you will feel after you perform the request.
- What's in it for you? Will you feel good about your altruism and sacrifice, or will you feel bitter about being used yet again?
- Think about what you want and be honest with others in order to avoid conflict and enrich relationships.

Stop expecting to be rewarded for your suffering. Some people believe that the larger the obstacle, the sweeter the reward. They volunteer to endure pain and neglect with the hope of being rewarded somehow.

If you find yourself stuck in this state of mind, think of times in your life (especially childhood) when you experienced joy without suffering. Putting others first must make you feel you have gained something. Does it make you feel valued, irreplaceable or respected? Is it a feeling of nobility? Analyze what you gain each time you act the martyr.

Stop holding on to your suffering. In any given situation suffering may include some or all of the following: guilt, a feeling of unworthiness, fear of change, fear of conflict, inability to see options or alternatives, stubbornness, or a belief that life has to be difficult.

- These beliefs can then lead to resentment, anger or depression.
- Letting go of suffering is analogous to going to the bathroom.
- There are no feelings of guilt, unworthiness, fear of relief, and certainly there is no stubbornness about going to the bathroom. When you feel enough discomfort, you go to the bathroom.
- Look at holding on to your suffering the same way. Relief is possible, it's a good thing and you are worthy of it.

Examine your beliefs. Martyrdom is closely associated with many of the world's religions in terms of people suffering and dying for their beliefs.

- What are the beliefs that you're suffering for?
- Are you trying to live up to an impossible standard?
- Demanding perfection from yourself?
- Feeling guilty? Are you believing your "inner critic"?
- A good question to ask yourself throughout the day is "Am I enjoying what I'm doing right now? If not, why am I doing it?"
- Most of your answers will probably sound like "Because I want..." or "Because I believe I should..."

Take responsibility. Regardless of the reasons why you're in the situation you're in, take responsibility for dealing with it as it is now. Ask yourself "What do I do that contributes to the problem?" and "What can I do to make the situation better?"

- For example, if you feel that someone in the house does not do their share of the housework, you may have cleaned up after them because you couldn't bear to see the mess, and/or you

may have expressed your dissatisfaction in subtle or passive-aggressive ways that are easily ignored. Both of these things have enabled the person to continue in their behavior.

- If their actions upset you, it's because you have allowed them to. Instead, when you are tempted to do their chore for them, you should ask them directly to do it that day.
- When you ask, be calm and neutral in your tone - avoid showing irritation or hurt. This is a reasonable request to make, and if you make it reasonably then there's a good chance the person will respond by doing as you ask. Controlling your emotions will minimize conflict and get you what you want.

Don't be afraid to change your behavior. Ask yourself what step can you take right now to improve the situation. Even if it's a baby step, it is still forward movement, and putting small steps together makes progress and builds momentum for positive change.

- Fear of change is really the fear of the consequence of change.
- Personal growth only occurs through change.
- The consequence of change is rarely what we imagine it to be.
- You might be scared to "rock the boat"; many martyrs often bend over backwards to avoid inconveniencing others, and to avoid confrontation.
- Be willing to disappoint people, you can't make everyone happy all the time. Don't try.

Permit yourself to have something better. Give yourself permission to practice some self-care. If you were driving across a desert and were low on gas, you would pull into a gas station, put gas in the car, stretch your legs, use the restroom, and maybe have a soda or a snack. In short, you would practice a little sensible self-care.

- It is doubtful, if you were low on gas, you would keep driving until you were out of gas, having to walk miles in the scorching sun, warding off scorpions and wild beasts to the nearest gas station - if you even knew where it was - and then lug a gas can back to your car.
- Give yourself permission to engage in a little self-care. Your car can't run on an empty tank, and neither can you.
- Every day, take some time to do something healing or fulfilling for you.
- Take a bubble bath, exercise, write in a journal, or meditate for an hour. If you regularly spend time on self-care, you will recharge your batteries and be less drained from dealing with others.