

Spring cleaning

You don't have to be friends with everyone

ILLUSTRATION: SAM BROWN OF EXPLODINGDOG.COM

Toxic friends. We've all had them. For whatever the reason, certain platonic relationships just tank. And when that happens, most of us feel trapped.

Unlike romantic relationships, which we all learn to accept are generally temporary, we're socialized to believe that friendships should last forever. It's the "bros before hos, sisters before misters" mentality. You can't just dump a friend.

Actually, you can. In fact, if a friendship isn't working for you anymore, you should. Toxic friends, just like toxic relationships, are a waste of your time. They limit your future happiness, they stress you out and they're just not worth it.

So, in the interest of improving your life, we've compiled a list of the most notorious toxic friends, their identifying characteristics and possible ways to kick them to the curb. Think of it as Feng Shui for your friendships.

THE COMPETITOR

Superficially supportive, the Competitor wants to know how much you make and what you got on that last exam, because she needs to beat you. While annoying and transparent, the Competitor's claws will only really come out if she perceives that you're pulling ahead. The relationship quickly deteriorates into vaguely hostile comments, faux-comedic jibes, or outright rage.

Cut 'Em Loose:

No need to be direct, just do your best to kick her ass at everything. Force her to accept the constant bitterness of defeat. With any luck, this toxic friend will scuttle away on her own.

THE SAD SACK

This person always needs to talk: In the middle of the night, during your favourite show, at the movies, at coffee. What sucks about the Sad Sack is that he never listens. An emotional sponge, he's sucking you dry. Sad Sacks care only about themselves.

Say Sayonara:

Phase him out. Cut conversations short, stop making dates and screen your calls. If cornered, admit that your heart just isn't in it anymore. Suggest Sad Sack see a therapist instead.

THE EGOMANIAC

Bereft of normal social skills, the Egomaniac thinks she doesn't have many friends because people can't handle how fabulous she is. That's why she likes you — you're never jealous, intimidated, threatened by her amazingness, the way other people are. Or so the Egomaniac believes.

Kick Her to the Curb:

You've got to spell it out. Let this toxic friend know that you're ditching her

because she's obnoxious, deluded and a socially retarded mess. Don't worry about her feelings. She'll just think you're jealous.

THE FRIEND WITH JUDGING EYES

Judging Eyes disdains your agnostic tendencies, thinks your gay friends are "confused" and tells you he's "praying for you." It's the same friend who found *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to be "seriously offensive," but watched it anyway. Hang this hypocrite. Friends don't have to be hedonistic, just respectful.

Bye Bye Bible Bunny:

Actually, Judging Eyes might not be devastated to see you go. You're a bad influence anyway. Tell him you don't really feel you can be around someone who doesn't respect you. He'll continue to pray his little head off on your behalf, but you won't have to hear about it.

THE MEAN BEEOTCH

For whatever reason, this one-time friend has become a back stabbing, nasty Beeotch. So why hang on? Once a friendship disintegrates into meanness, sarcasm and/or any form of relationship poaching, it can't be saved. The Mean Beeotch has something against you and won't tell you why, so just get out. And, yes, men can be beeotches too.

It's Not Me, It's You:

The Mean Beeotch is likely to respond with hostility, so keep the dumping as brief and straightforward as you can. Air specific grievances if you must, but don't get into an argument. It's all about the clean break. If you can, try to get the last word. Practise blocking her calls, hanging up and walking away. Don't feel guilty. Some people just suck.

— JENNIFER SELK/DOSE

