



**AS CHILDREN, WE INHERIT THE COAT OF ARMS,
BELIEFS, RITES, AND HABITS OF OUR FAMILY.
WE HAVE LITTLE CHOICE OVER THAT.**

**AS ADULTS, WE MUST REMEMBER THAT WE
HAVE THE POWER TO CHOOSE DIFFERENTLY.**

- LISA ROBBIN YOUNG

Empowering, Disempowering, and Toxic Relationships

As children, we're born into some lineage. Even if we're adopted, we're endowed with a family riddled with habits, beliefs, and constructs that shape our lives - for better or worse.

There's little we can do as children beyond doing our best to "bloom where we are planted." But as adults, *we have the power to choose our family.*

Just like a seed is more likely to flourish in an environment that is cultivated and nourished, so too can we thrive when we "plant" ourselves in the fertile soil of nourishing relationships.

But how do we choose?

It helps to understand the difference between empowering and disempowering relationships. Like fertile soil, an empowering relationship will nourish you, "fill you up" and enrich your sense of confidence, self-worth, and keep you level-headed. Having or being a "Yes man" isn't an empowering relationship. You want to surround yourself with people that see your potential and hold you to a higher, yet achievable standard. Think of Mary Poppins. She was an encourager, but she didn't put up with any crap.

We all go through times when we feel "less than" our best self. It could be the loss of a loved one or something else that triggers a self-worth issue. For most of us there will be a time in our life when we need to be encouraged. This is the trade-off of building *healthy* relationships. Sometimes we're the encourager, and sometimes we need to be encouraged.

If you're dealing with someone in an ongoing state of disempowerment, it helps to tell the difference between those occasional phases and someone who's chronically disempowering for you.

And if YOU are the one creating the drama, get the support you need to be healthy.

A Phase Or A Habit?

It's been said that people come into our lives for a reason, a season, or a lifetime. It can be useful to apply that same logic to disempowering relationships in your life. You need to determine if these are, in fact, toxic relationships built on years of habitual behaviors, or if it's just a phase they're going through that requires extra support.

If they are generally an "up" person, and have recently come on hard times, it's likely that this is a phase of disempowerment that will pass once they've gotten the extra support they need to get through this tough time. It still might not be up to you to provide that support, but it's helpful to know that it's a stage rather than a habitual behavior that's got them down.

On the other hand, some people have made it a habit to be disempowering. Their constant negativity, or attention-getting behaviors do little to lift you up and generally bring the focus of any conversation back to them. If this is a regular, ongoing pattern in your relationship, it's NOT healthy, and needs to be addressed. And even if you are a licensed professional capable of helping them, I suggest they seek help elsewhere. Sometimes absence really does make the heart grow fonder.

Take a look at your disempowering relationships and ask yourself if it's a phase or a habit.

Empowerment

With ruthless honesty, this is what comes to mind when I think of Empowerment:

These are the people I consider my empowering family

Disempowerment

With ruthless honesty, this is what comes to mind when I think of Disempowerment:

These are the people I consider disempowering family:

Phases or Habits?

As I look at my disempowering family, if there are people with whom I'd like to continue to be in relationship, these are the habits or phases I see that need to be addressed in order to have a healthy relationship. I realize I can't change them, I can only change how I show up in the relationship. That said, this is what I see:

These are the TOP 5 Most Important Relationships for me in the next 12 months:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Pick Just One

If you could only select relationship in the Key Area of Family to change over the next 12 months, what one shift would give you the most cause for celebration?

How would you feel if you could see that shift in your life?

How would you benefit from this shift?

What would you miss out on if you didn't make this shift?