

VICTIM TALK & RESPONSIBILITY TALK

By Marlene and Bob Neufeld

How you express yourself verbally can be both a clue to what you are really thinking as well as impact how you see yourself and the world. Catching yourself speaking “victim talk” and shifting into “responsibility talk” frees up energy and allows you to live as a person of true creative power.

One definition of “victim” is “everything out there has power over me.” Victims do not feel like they have power, they feel like they are at the effect of someone or something. The victim position is an unconscious attempt to avoid creative responsibility. It does so by veiling awareness of one’s personal power, and in doing so, greatly diminishes it. You will know you are in the victim position if you are feeling overwhelmed or powerless. The victim plays out his/her role by focusing on their own pain and suffering, as well as defeat. Once in this role, the victim is able to feel special, as it waits for someone else to fix the problem. Victims want help, and people to rescue them. However, what often happens instead is that victims attract people who blame them. Much conflict is about two people or groups who both believe they are a bigger victim than the other.

Here are some examples of “victim talk:”

- I’m sorry.
- I’m trying to ... (change).
- I have to ... (go to the dentist).
- I should ... (do better).
- Can I ... (talk to you)?
- I need to ... (do something about that).
- You made me ... (feel bad, angry, sad, scared).
- You never... (talk about your feelings).
- You always ... (criticize me).
- I can’t ... (do it).

Victim talk allows people to

- feel entitled,
- create conflict,
- maintain a façade,
- take no action,
- avoid living their own genius.
- complain, blame & criticize,
- be less than,
- conceal,
- give away their power,

When we presented this concept to a couple we were working with, they asked, “Why would anyone want to avoid living their own genius?” We explored with them the unconscious ways we often sabotage our own creativity, by doing things we are incompetent, or barely competent at, or even those things that we are excellent at, but not prioritizing those things we are genius at.

Responsibility is about living in integrity and your own personal creative power. It is about revealing, appreciating, and opening to learning. It breaks down facades, deepens intimacy, and focuses on what you have control over.

Here are some examples of “responsibility talk:”

- I feel ... (angry, sad, afraid).
- I choose to ... (go to the dentist).
- I caused ... (this result).
- I plan to ... (go to that event).
- I appreciate ... (your generosity).
- I notice that ... (my jaw is tight).
- I imagine ... (that you are angry).
- I’m making up a story that... (you don’t like me).
- I claim ... (responsibility for what happened).
- I wonder ... (how I can communicate more clearly).
- I’m experiencing ... (tingles up my back).
- I agree to ... (meet you at 9 pm tonight).
- I commit to ... (seeing you as my ally).

We invite you to notice when you are using victim talk. Beating yourself up for it doesn’t help. However, you can give yourself some love and appreciation for catching it and shift into speaking responsibility talk.

Many of the ideas in this article came from colleagues Linda Brannan, Philip Johncock & Diana Chapman and are based on the work of Drs. Kathlyn & Gary Hendricks (www.hendricks.com). Many of the concepts in this article are explored in more depth in articles on our website.