Horoscope

# Get rid of these toxic people in your life Mike Peake | Dec 13, 2018

SELF-IMPROVEMENT

The first step is to spot them; next is to wave them goodbye. Our guide tells you how...



Toxic friends are everywhere, and if you're now mentally going through your list of buddies and

struggling to find the bad egg, then perhaps you should stop — lest you come to the crushing conclusion that the rotten penny is you (just kidding!). Part of the problem is the very concept of 'friends' in the first place; it's something, say experts, that has been corrupted by social media over the years.

clients in the UAE, we probably only really have four each. If you have four great friends who really are there for you, then you're extremely lucky, she says. Most of the other people in your 50 or 100-strong list of social media pals are not going to race

over to your house in an emergency or empty their savings account if you need emergency medical

Facebook and the like give us the illusion of having dozens or even hundreds of friends, when in

fact, says international life, relationship and career coach Michelle Zelli, who has a number of

consider to be friends probably haven't really got your back at all. 'A friend is not meant to be perfect, but we would expect a friend to be constructive, to be positive,' says Michelle.

'We want friends to be cheerleaders.' They should also, she says, be brave enough to tell us when

we're about to make a big mistake, but this is a completely different thing to constantly putting us

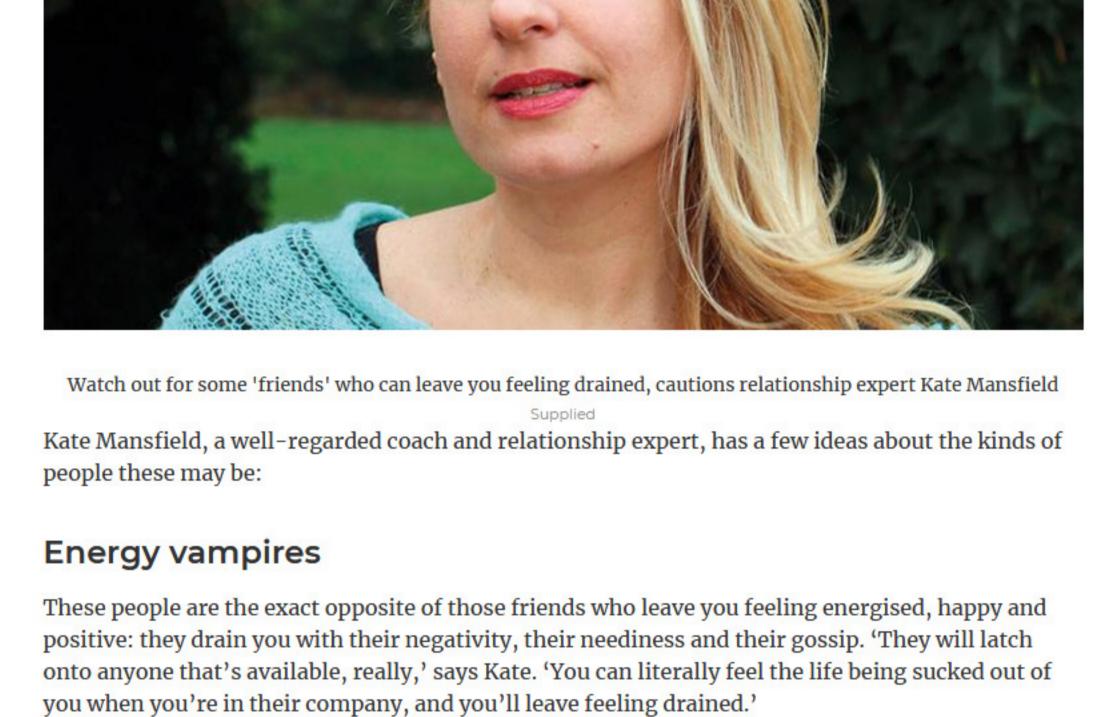
Likewise, some of those 10 or 20 work colleagues who you consider to be friends are unlikely to be

really there for you in your hour of need. It may hurt to admit it, but quite a few of the people you

'Toxicity in a relationship is where somebody makes you feel bad about yourself,' says Michelle. No one needs that.

The point of this article is not to encourage you to abandon every questionable friend you can think

of, but to pause for a moment and to ask if there are people around you who you would actually be



A kind of Energy Vampire that is worth mentioning in its own right, depressive people are simply no fun to be around. They are doom-mongers who are often looking for someone — you — to dump their misery onto. 'They can end up making you feel depressed, too,' says Kate. Domineering people

undermine you, says Kate, and make you feel stupid, or somehow 'less' than them. 'They generally

have self-esteem issues,' says Kate, 'and are looking to make everyone else feel worse so they can

thing as well, she says: they want things their way regardless of how it affects you. They want to be

You agreed to meet at 8 and she shows up an hour later. He said he would take care of the birthday

these types that the root of the problem is often that they don't feel worthy of the relationship or

and their lives are very chaotic as a result. 'The impact on you is that it can affect your confidence

they have confidence issues,' says Kate. Equally, it can be that they have some kind of addiction

and self-esteem and it makes the relationship very difficult. It gets boring, really,' Kate adds.

party and then dumped it back in your lap at the very last minute. 'It's good to remember with

then leverage that to feel better about themselves and feel more confident.' It's often a control

Your group's self-appointed decision maker, the domineering type will often use tactics to

## right more than they want to be happy. **Flakes**

Depressive people

Green-eyed monsters The underlying issue with any jealous friends of yours is insecurity again, says Kate. 'Often people will do things to get a reaction to harm you or sabotage you, and jealous friends are generally not people to be trusted,' she adds. In a romantic relationship, she says, a partner who is very jealous for no reason can be exhausting – and can really destroy the relationship.

This final group is unique in that Kate says narcissistic friends are the only ones that you have little

hope of 'fixing'. Narcissism is quite a complex disorder, she says, pointing out that narcissists are

often abusive and will try and deny your reality in order to get out of taking responsibility for their

own bad behaviour (this is known as 'gaslighting'). 'People around narcissists often end up feeling

There are other types of toxic friends, and it's important to understand that not everyone in this

rogues' gallery necessarily needs to be abandoned outright. Kate says relationships with people in

#### the first five of the above groups may be salvageable. The way to begin is to explain to them that you don't like their behaviour and that you are setting new boundaries. You might put a time limit on things,' she suggests. 'If someone is always half an hour late you could say, "Listen, if this

like and who, in turn, like you back:

Step 2: Make your move

she says.

Step 1: Get into the right place

like they have something wrong with themselves,' says Kate.

happens once more, I don't want to be in this friendship any more".'

**Narcissists** 

shaming in our childhood, then we will actually normalise that kind of behaviour and therefore may have friends that are not supportive and are toxic. So we can collect toxic friends and know right from the outset; others catch us unawares.' Michelle has a check-list of tips to help you deal with toxic friends, and, ultimately, strike the worst offenders off the list so that you can concentrate on spending time with people you really

What you want to avoid, says Michelle, is a kneejerk reaction. If, upon reading this, you suddenly

realise you have a toxic friend and want to eject them from your life, you should sleep on the idea

behaviour, or set out to change it — and be prepared to walk away if you don't get what you want,'

first. 'Get yourself into a place emotionally and mentally where you are OK to either accept the

soured over time, almost without us noticing. 'But as well as that, if we are used to humiliation and

What's interesting, adds Michelle, is that we often didn't actually choose toxic friends: things

### them about the aspects of their behaviour that you don't like. 'They may actually value that input,' says Michelle. 'Make sure you clearly communicate your feelings and your hopes for how you want things to change.'

Michelle says some toxic friends may redeem themselves if you give them that chance. So speak to



Michelle says building an exit strategy is important when preparing to junk toxic friends

sever ties with). 'Know what you are getting into because if you do break up, then you may miss them,' Michelle warns. Step 4: Prepare for the worst-case scenario Once you're committed to making a clean break, Michelle says it can be helpful to consider the worst-case scenario. 'Once you have a strategy for dealing with that, you can release a lot of the

If you've given someone a second chance and they've failed to observe the line you drew in the

potential void they may leave (something especially true if it is a family member you're about to

sand, it's probably time to walk away – but you need to consider how you are going to deal with the

#### Say the words. Walk away. Move onto a new chapter in your life. 'Your emotions will come in waves,' says Michelle. 'You'll likely go through anger, sadness, fear and guilt — and they will pass.' One thing that most people will also have to get through is a number of awkward social situations. Friends you have in common may want to know what's going on; you and your ex-pal

Step 3: Build an exit strategy

fear and the pain,' she says.

Step 5: Do it

may end up being invited to the same parties. 'Don't share the story, don't get into 'he said/she said', because then you're getting into drama and gossip,' says Michelle. If an event comes up that you'd rather not be at, she suggests saying: 'That's not an energy that's working for me at the moment, so I'm going to pass.' So what will it all feel like a few months down the line? When you don't have to deal with the feelings of dread that used to come with the arrival of your toxic former friend — the one who used to make you feel miserable, or small, or annoyed? The biggest plus, says Kate, should be a feeling of freedom. 'If you've tried to fix a friendship and it's not worked, then you have to put yourself

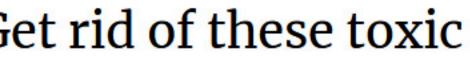
Time is a resource hugely undervalued in society, she adds. We can waste our time and energy in toxic relationships when we could be having fun doing something nice. 'Life is short and you shouldn't spend a minute with people who don't value and respect you and love you when you're offering those things in return,' she says.

first. Once free, you're not going to have all the negative side effects of being around that person.'

'By breaking up a toxic friendship, you're also helping that person by letting them see the impact

of their behaviour,' says Michelle. 'What they do with that is not your business. What is important

now is how you run your life — and the minimum standards you insist upon.'





treatment.

down and undermining us.

better not hanging around with any more.

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