

Self-Esteem / Life Strategies or Life Scripts I

For People to Satisfy their Indirect Self-Acceptance Addiction

By Jaime Jusidman

On my first white paper in the “Self-Esteem” series, I wrote about how our sense of self-worth or self-esteem evolves. I described the story of David Silverman and through him, introduced the concepts of Indirect Self-Acceptance Addiction (ISAA) and Self-Esteem Vampires. I wrote about the life strategies or life scripts that we take in order to enhance or protect our sense of value or esteem.

My focus in this second white paper and in those to follow is to explore in more depth the different life strategies or life scripts that people use or live by in order to satisfy their Indirect Self-Acceptance Addiction (ISAA). I will be introducing you, the reader, to different people who have crossed my path and shared their stories and, in doing so, I have identified their specific life strategy or life script.

I am hoping that through these stories you will be able to see some reflection of yourself and in doing so, trigger some introspection on your part regarding the script you have lived by and the style you have embraced in order to perform in your lifelong play. What have you gained from it? What have you paid for it? How have others been affected by you and your ISAA? And, is this life script a sustainable path for you and for those around you?

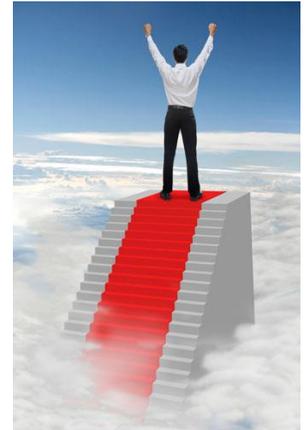
Through my experiences of working as a coach, I have



learned a great deal about myself as a person and how my own ISAA can be either positive or an obstacle in my life and journey as a husband, father, friend, consultant, and leader in my community. I am constantly reminded of what goes on in any given interaction or situation that triggers the “vampire”

in me and brings out my urge to feed my self-esteem by sucking it from others.

In this story, I introduce Mike who I met 20 years ago, and who is 10 years my senior. At the time I met Mike, he was at the top of his consulting career. He had a booming practice, he enjoyed worldwide renown, and he was President of several training and consulting associations at both the national and international levels. When I first met him, I was attending an international conference in San Francisco where he was the keynote speaker at the opening plenary session. I was taken by his poise and presence, and he was outgoing, charming, and very smart.



During his one-hour presentation, he kept his audience’s attention by using his wit, knowledge, and energy. He was very entertaining, spontaneous, and fast on his feet. He gave such a performance that he got a standing ovation and an overall rating of 4.8 out of a maximum of five points. I wanted to have a conversation with him so I waited for all his fans to go. I approached him and introduced myself. He gracefully acknowledged that he had heard about me but was not sure from whom or in what context. I shared with him how impressed I was by his performance as well as the content of his presentation.

I proceeded to ask him if he would be willing, and if his schedule permitted, to meet with me for coffee later in the week in order to get better acquainted and figure out ways that we could work on some projects together. Without hesitation, he graciously agreed and asked me if I would not mind meeting him in his office, rather than in a coffee shop, the following Friday at 11:00 a.m. On the Friday, I arrived at 11:00 a.m. sharp. I sat in the reception area and waited for a while; in the meantime, I could hear him speaking loudly over the phone. His receptionist apologized for the delay and I responded with a hand movement and facial gesture implying that it was not a big deal. After all, it was a Friday in sunny Southern California and I had nothing planned for the rest of the day.

At 11:20 a.m., he came out to greet me and asked me to join him in his office. It was furnished with a beautiful mahogany desk and very comfortable chairs, and hanging on the walls were more than 100 framed diplomas, awards, and letters of recognition from all over the world. I was also impressed with all the pictures of him posing in the company of very well-known personalities from the business, political, and entertainment worlds (i.e. Bill Clinton, Steven Spielberg, Steve Jobs, and others). In anyone's eyes, he was the epitome of success and fame.

As we started our conversation, he spent 20 minutes telling me about how busy his schedule was and, in some detail, shared how relevant his contributions were to some of his Fortune 500 clients. He proceeded to ask me about my interests and my history and what I had in mind in terms of working with him. In less than a minute, and in a very charming way, he took over the



conversation and proceeded to tell me what I should do. He often used terms like, "the fact is..." and "well, the reality of it is..." At the end of our conversation, I left feeling tired and a little bit depleted

but in spite of those feelings on my part, I agreed to have a lunch meeting with him in another two weeks somewhere in West Los Angeles. According to his beliefs, he said, "sharing bread and a personal conversation is the best way to begin building a trusting and comfortable relationship."

Two weeks later, we met at his office and he offered to drive us to his favorite restaurant. As we drove, he would point out people in the street who knew him and he told me how much they valued and liked him. In the restaurant, all the waiters knew him and we were immediately seated at his favorite table. During the conversation, we discussed how we could work together, the roles each of us would play in new or ongoing projects, how he would take the senior role in interfacing with the clients, and how I would assume a more junior role. I pursued the relationship and worked with him on several projects. His approach to consulting was one of "answer giver" and "expert," a style that combined his charm with his "know-it-all" mentality. As time passed, he continued to reveal his need to be the center of attention and the "protagonist of every journey." At the early stages of a client relationship, his clients loved him and felt admiration for his overt expertise. They were convinced that he was the man who had the answers to their problems and that he truly had their best interests in mind. At a superficial level he did, but deep down what he was doing was staying at the center of any exchange by being charming and discounting his clients' points of

view. He was using his "experience and knowledge" in order to meet his needs of having to be the center of attention and relevant while implicitly devaluing clients and making them dependent upon him. Eventually, this pattern of behavior got in the way and made the consultant/client relationship unsustainable. It became very transparent that everything he did was about his need to validate his sense of self-worth.

During the time we worked together, I had the opportunity to meet his family (his wife, two daughters, and his oldest and only son). One evening, he invited a group of associate consultants to have dinner at his house and meet his family. During the table conversation, this pattern kept emerging. He had to be the center of the conversation. No one knew more than he did. His responses to anyone's opinions included comments such as "yes, but..." "you don't understand..." and "the fact is..." At that point, I realized how very toxic and depleting this relationship was for me. I decided to distance myself from him and slowly severed the relationship. Fifteen years later, I received a call from him. He wanted to meet with me for a consult and feedback and wanted to understand why our relationship had ended. I agreed to meet him in his office a week later. When I entered his office, the wall was still full of the old diplomas, awards, and photographs. I also saw a lonely man.

He was defeated, confused, and yearning for his lost success. In the office next to his, sat his son who reminded me of his father and the way that he had acted towards his son when he was a child and young adult. At that moment, I had a grin on my face as I remembered my late father saying, "The apple does not fall far from the tree."



Mike uses an "Active Approach" in his life script. He will use his charismatic charm combined with his "know-it-all" attitude to satisfy his need to always be the center of attention. He is a Self-Esteem Vampire who gets his addiction filled by charming others, making them dependent upon him, and then gaining their admiration and affection while at the same time depleting them of their self-esteem.

I hope Mike's story triggers something about yourself or someone you know. In my next white paper in the series, I will introduce you to Rose.