



the crabbing effect

Written by bubba



Why are you friends with the people you're friends with? Because you're similar, you know each other, you like to hang around with them because you have things in common. Now, what happens when you reach a point of introspection and realize that much of what you have in common isn't in your best interest any longer? Example: *Could a swinger couple still maintain platonic relationships with their swinger friends if they made the decision that sharing partners was eroding the intimacy between them and therefore, they were quitting the lifestyle?* Doubtful. But more importantly, how would their swinger friends feel? Judged? Reflective? Defensive and annoyed? How would their swinger friends treat them? Reject their decision? Try to talk them out of the decision to change lifestyles?

Hey what the fuck, I'll use my own shortcomings for an example. It is my web site after all. I periodically think about the role of alcohol in my life. I've got an alcoholic father, I drink more than most people. Though I haven't lately inventoried my catalog of 'Things I wish I hadn't done while drinking' I believe it to be a volume worthy of evaluation. Have I ever stopped? Yep, college - right after spending some time in jail. Strike that - I quit right after getting *arrested* thinking, quite craftily, that throwing myself in counseling for alcohol would be a way to circumvent a stiff sentence...so it was actually *before jail*...and an incorrect assumption by the way. And good thing it was wrong. I was being a manipulative fuck by doing that.



119

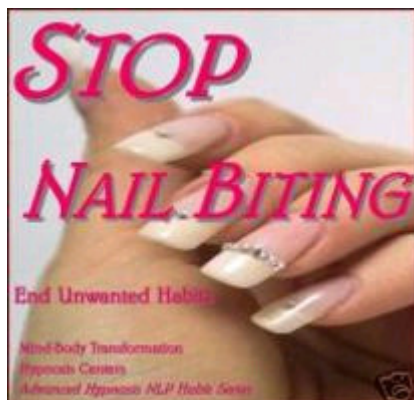
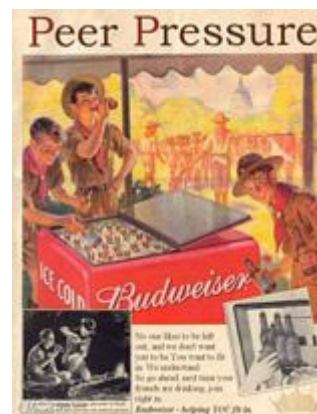
Son
Of a
Bitch
Everything's
Real

But, turns out, I accidentally learned a whole hell of a lot about myself - good, bad and otherwise. It was during that time I decided to actually continue to not drink for awhile. How was it? Well, it was fine. An omission of behavior certainly isn't that hard as far as gross motor functions go. What did make it hard? All my jackass friends feeling it was their duty to pull me off the wagon and put a stop to all my ridiculous pie-in-the-sky ideas...you know, sobriety, growing up, trying to do things that are healthy and helpful. It was the peer pressure that made not drinking hard, those fuckers. Eventually I started drinking again for reasons I can't remember. It wasn't a big peer-induced breakdown or anything. If memory serves, I think I was only quitting for a prescribed period of time and that time was up. At any rate, I carried away from that experience two key things:

- 1) An increased sense of self understanding and confidence and near immunity to peer pressure.
- 2) The understanding that when you make a change in your life that is at odds with the way you have been relating to people close to you, those people can become defensive, even against your plan to make positive changes in your own life.

Why is that? Friends should want friends to feel good, be strong, be capable and ever-growing...shouldn't they? Shouldn't we? In theory, yes. In reality, however, we are entirely too self-absorbed to activate that kind of good will. We're too uncomfortable that your opinion of yourself might really represent your opinion of us...because everything is about us. *You think you drink too much? Well then you must think I drink too much because we drink the same amount...* Or, maybe we already know some things about ourselves. Maybe we're irritated that we don't have the strength we perceive you of having: the ability to make changes.

But if we are already in touch with our own shortcomings and we see others making positive changes, we should believe that we can do it too, right? Wrong. Even if we acknowledge that we all have problems, having them together makes us all feel like we're normal and therefore not as pressured to take action. Let's face it – the hard part isn't really doing or not doing certain behaviors, it's the peripheral elements affected by us changing - having to deal with standing out in social settings, having to cope with peer pressure, forcing our close friends and family to think of and treat us differently. *That* stuff is all incredibly hard. Why would anyone want to go through that? Answer: they wouldn't. So instead, the easiest thing for some of them to do is take their friends who are trying to be better down, down to China town...back to a place where we're all 'equal' again.



All bad behaviors are just coping mechanisms for processing things you're not able to process in a healthy way. Some people smoke a pack of cigarettes when they're stressed, some listen to music instead. Some people eat everything in their fridge when they are anxious, some people work out instead. Some people don't even know why they do what they do, spending the bulk of their waking hours shoveling coal into a big burning void at the center of their character not knowing how to change anything and not interested in figuring it out. But so what? If they wanted to fix it, they'd be working on it. The problem is that if there is anything they want less than to be working on their own issues, it's to have *you* working on the same things...and being successful.

It's hard when you realize that unsupportive friends are really just selfish. Dealing with the revelation that many close relationships are dependent on the common ground of destructive behaviors isn't fun, and it can feel accommodating to just acquiesce and revert back to the behaviors that keep a pleasant face on those relationships. And then the whole plan to get healthy is fucked up because what has really been learned is that we care more about the opinions others have of us than we do about getting ourselves to a healthier place. We all inherently care about the opinions held of us by the people we're close to, but the bottom line is that *friends* want friends to do things that are better for them. They are able to separate from their own experience and be supportive of the actions and endeavors of the people they care about and not be consumed by how the new behaviors might affect them...or might not. Smart friends are able to use the positive changes they see in others to their advantage, recognizing the difficulties associated with achievement and using the successes of others as motivation. That's positive peer pressure. Friends that instead spend their time trying to derail the healthful changes of others are, well...they're just not friends.



But what do I know? People always say I oversimplify things. Then I say too many people try to make things seem more complicated than they are.

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