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The four leeches

Looking good

Check in with yourself: do you have a habit of

- competitive speaking
- speechwriting
- saying “I know”

Exercise 1: say what you mean, without exaggeration, without needing to beat anyone or be impressive.

Exercise 2: make a practice of really listening and trusting that you will know what to say when the time comes.

Exercise 3: be consciously open to learn; assume that actually you know very little and be thirsty for new ideas, even if they conflict with old ones.

Being right

Interrupting: check in - listen to yourself to ascertain if you have a habit of interrupting. Ask the people you most often speak to if in doubt. If you do



think this is a habit for you, your exercise is to take a deep breath every time before you speak. As well as being good fuel for your breath (and good for generally), it gives you time to notice that someone else is talking!

Being right: if you feel the constant need to be right and justified in everything you say, which might mean any advice or alternative perspectives occur as to you as criticism, make a practice of reflecting and validating.

Reflecting is active listening (see chapter 5): “So what you are saying is...”.

Validation is “It make sense to me that you would think/feel that way” (even if you profoundly digress, try to see who that person is like that).

People pleasing

In chapter 6 you will be defining your values. These go alongside your life goals to help you navigate life each and every day. Stay true to them and you will be able to mitigate excessive people pleasing.

Fixing

How good are you with people who are upset?

If you feel the need to ‘make it all right’, then next time try just empathising without trying to make the upset go away.

How well do you express your own emotions?



If you pine for planet Vulcan, where emotions are taboo, try widening your emotional range by indulging in some weepy movies or novels, or doing things that evince extreme elation (bungee jumping, anyone?). The aim is to be comfortable with appropriate, healthy expression of emotion. This does not mean that wild emotionalism is the goal!

If on the other hand you feel you might be excessively expressive, practice speaking your feelings instead of being them: “When you do x, I feel hurt” or “I am feeling very angry right now” rather than breaking something.