

What I Learned from an Unwelcome Visitor to Our Attic

Myrna Lapres
March 6, 2020



About a month ago, I started hearing noises overhead at night while trying to fall asleep. We have a large oak tree in our back yard and it isn't unusual to hear squirrels run across our roof but not at night. After a few nights of lying awake due to the scratching noises, I became convinced that one of the squirrels was living in our attic.

I was met with skepticism when I told my husband, Michael. That is until one night, he heard the noise too. Now I love nature and animals as long as they don't decide to move into my domain. What I really wanted was for my husband to do something about it -- to fix the problem. But he wasn't quick to respond.

I am not proud to say that I went into victim mode. I whined and fussed and complained. Finally, he said, "Why don't you do something about it? Call someone to get a quote." Wow, what a novel idea! Here I was wanting him to take care of the problem and suddenly, I was empowered to take action.

I contacted four companies that came to our home, tramped around in the attic and gave free quotes for their solution to our problem. I found out way more than I ever cared to know about critters that live in attics -- roof rats, squirrels and even bats.

Turns out that squirrels can squeeze themselves through a hole the size of an apple core and rats can get through even smaller openings. And our roof had a number of possible entrances. One of the inspectors pointed out a chewed-out area on one of the gables that looked large enough for a whole family of squirrels to gain access. Michael got in on the action by putting a motion-sensitive camera in the attic and we identified our unwelcome guest -- a raccoon!

The amazing thing about acting like a victim is that it puts us in a state to view everything in life as happening to us. Victimhood is the belief that other people need to make us happy and solve our problems for us.

With impeccable timing, Michael and I have been reading Greg Baer's "Real Love for Wise Men and Women" during the raccoon habitation. Dr. Baer says, "If I appear pathetic and helpless enough -- if I act like a victim -- I can attract your sympathy and accomplish two things: you might not hurt me and you might give me what I want. Victims have to lie about their responsibility for the choices they make, and they have to lie about other people being perpetrators. These lies separate them from the truth and the possibility of feeling Real Love."

Children learn their beliefs and behaviors from observing us. If in their presence, we whine and complain about our boss, our co-workers, our spouses, the government, the neighbors and so on, our children see us and learn to act like victims themselves. As well, we teach them to act like victims when we allow them to manipulate us. These learned behaviors can contribute to our children developing a sense of entitlement and view the world as treating them unfairly.

Almost all parents, when asked what they most want for their children, would respond that they want them to be happy. Being a victim can buy sympathy and attention, but never Real Love. Genuine happiness comes from taking responsibility, doing what needs to be done and feeling the sense of accomplishment no matter how old we are.

I am happy to say that we hired one of the pest companies. They have removed the raccoon and will patch up the holes in a few days. And I had the opportunity to relearn an important lesson in part because I have a wise husband who is helping me to recognize and move out of victimhood.