

ELIMINATING TOXIC INFLUENCES



Certain people and situations in life can trigger us to feel badly about ourselves or engage in destructive behaviors. Identifying the toxic influences in our lives and taking steps to create boundaries or a new life without them can improve mental and physical health over time.

TRAITS OF TOXIC PEOPLE



Manipulation. Toxic people are often very good at manipulation. They may seem to be genuinely interested in your company and getting to know you at first, but will eventually use the knowledge they gain about you to try and get you to do what they want. They will often twist your words or make you feel guilty to get their way.



They make you feel bad about yourself. Insults are the most direct way that toxic people can make you feel bad, but most of the time the ways they affect your self-esteem are more subtle. When you are feeling happy or proud of yourself, they will find ways to “rain on your parade” or downplay your achievements. They might also act like they are smarter than you to make you feel dumb or insignificant.



Being judgemental. Everyone can be judgemental from time to time, but a toxic person is judgemental almost all of the time. They see things in black and white and criticize anything that they don't agree with or approve of, instead of considering the circumstances or the feelings of other people.



Negativity. Some people just can't seem to see the good in life. They will find something bad about everything and aren't able to find joy in anything. Being around someone like this can make it hard for you enjoy yourself and be positive. Sometimes it can be easy to confuse the symptoms of depression for negativity, so it is worth having a conversation with someone to determine if they need help getting through depression or if they are truly being toxic.



Passive aggression. These behaviors are a way that people express their discontent without having a conversation about their problems. This type of hostility is less obvious than anger and can be shown in a number of different ways. Some forms of passive aggression include snide comments, sabotaging the efforts of other people, and purposefully doing something or *not* doing something to make things inconvenient for someone or get them upset.



Self-centered. Toxic people care mostly about themselves. They don't think about how their actions affect others and believe they are better than everyone else. Someone who is self-centered is focused on getting what they want and is unlikely to compromise or consider another person's point of view.



Difficulty with anger management. Someone who has trouble managing their anger will make you feel like you are walking on egg shells every time you are around them. The slightest thing can trigger them into a fit of rage, and often nasty, hurtful things are said while they are in this mental state. There may be apologies the day after, but often they are insincere and the toxic person will repeat their angry, hurtful behaviors soon after.



Controlling. One of the most dangerous traits of a toxic person is controlling behavior. They may try to restrict you from contacting your friends or family, or limit resources like transportation or access to money to restrict your ability to interact with the world around you. If you are in a situation where someone is trying to restrict your movements or communication, this is domestic abuse and requires immediate action. Call 1-800-799-7233 or 1-800-799-7233 for TTY, or if you're unable to speak on the phone, you can log onto theline.org or text “LOVEIS” to 22522.

FAST FACTS



An average of 80% of Americans have experienced emotional abuse.¹



Toxic friends are common. 84% of women and 75% of men report having a toxic friend at some point.²

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH, VISIT MHASCREENING.ORG TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

Sources

¹Carney, M.M., Barner, J.R. (2012). Prevalence of partner abuse: Rates of emotional abuse and control. *Partner Abuse*, 3(3), 286–335.
²<https://www.today.com/health/toxic-friends-8-10-people-endure-poisonous-pals-1C9413205>.

DETOXING YOUR LIFE

This worksheet will help you think through ways to create healthy boundaries so you can get rid of toxic influences in your life.

WHAT IS THE THING THAT YOU NEED TO STOP OR GET OUT OF YOUR LIFE?

This can be a person, behavior or situation. Example: I want healthier relationships.

DESIRABLE OR HEALTHY

Examples: I want someone who encourages me, someone who is patient.

UNCLEAR

Examples: Having fights where we yell, talking over each other.

TOXIC OR UNACCEPTABLE

Examples: Hitting each other, cussing at each other, name calling.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO GIVE YOURSELF A PEP TALK? Examples: I deserve to have healthy relationships. I choose me.

WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO THE TOXIC INFLUENCE TO SET BOUNDARIES? Examples: It is not ok for us to do this. I want us to get better and these are what is ok for you to do and what is absolutely not ok for you to do.

WHAT CAN YOU DO AND SAY TO REINFORCE YOUR BOUNDARIES OR CREATE HEALTHY DISTANCE?

Examples: if you do (this), I'm going to leave. If you do (this) I'm going to walk out and take a break.
