

# Toxic Relationships: What They Are and How Not to Feel Crazy

BY DEBBIE MARTINEZ, DIVORCE COACH



**W**E ALL HAVE THEM, THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT LEAVE us feeling drained, frustrated and off balance. They come in the form of family, spouses, friends and co-workers. Even when we recognize what they are doing to us, we feel confused as to how to handle them. Well, let me shed some light on this energy sucking human being. A toxic relationship will do the following:

- » Keep you stuck and prevent your progress
- » Drain your energy and life from you
- » Rob you of joy and excitement
- » Make you begin to doubt yourself and your abilities
- » Your self-esteem is greatly affected
- » You blame yourself for their behavior
- » It can alter your personality

Do you see any or all of these traits in someone in your life? Personally or professionally? If so, please read on.

The first step is to see them for what and who they are; they are people who are afraid of rejection and abandonment. The second step is to remove yourself for awhile and clear your head; you will not be able to think clearly if you are in the midst of a toxic relationship. Last, decide if this is a relationship you want to remain in, whether it is work, family or friends. If you decide to stay then you will have to learn to empower yourself. Remember that toxic personalities will try to control as many areas in your life as you allow them to. They can do this in two ways, an out and out demand or the more subtle guilt and shame approach.

### Here are some things that will throw you back into the driver's seat.

- » You can only change yourself, your behavior and your reaction to the toxic person. Empower your position by setting boundaries.
- » Understand that as you attempt to regain your control, the toxic person will try to reassert his/her dominance and control, they will not be open to change.
- » Consistency is very important. Plot your course and stick to it.
- » Communicate that the relationship is going to change. Don't have this conversation while in a heated debate and don't list all of your expectations, only the most important ones.
- » Do not defend or debate your position; only state it and stop talking. Ex: I will not be criticized any longer (period) don't add because it's disrespectful or hurts my feelings.
- » Your opinion counts. If a toxic person makes a devaluing comment to you, calmly and simply state your opinion, don't compromise or bargain, do not engage or fight back.
- » Don't ever apologize for having your own opinion.
- » Keep your voice low and speak slow and deliberate.
- » Don't fall into their trap of manipulation. Stand your ground. You know the saying, "Pick your battles"? Well, with a toxic person, everything is a battle.

At the end of the day, your mental health and well-being is paramount and dealing with a toxic person can put a strain on both. If they think that your personal or professional relationship is a game, then show them how it's played.

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