

## How to Deal with Toxic People – Jantz, Gregory

Toxic people demonstrate behaviors that frequently keep others off balance through inconsistencies that

1. Deftly deflecting blame or responsibility;
2. Play on the goodwill or guilt of others;
3. Outright “gaslighting” – making others feel as if they are the dysfunctional ones. (7)

**Psychology Today:** “Toxic’ is obviously not a formal psychological term but rather is descriptive of how people often feel when dealing with certain individuals. Toxic describes interactions where boundaries are often blurred, where individuals themselves and/or their behaviors are felt to be difficult, challenging, demanding, often adversarial. Toxic relationships are not fueled by mutual care and support but are often skewed to accommodate an individual’s needs and demands. Needless to say, these are not healthy relationships and often, whether meaning to or not, toxic behaviors chip away at the equality of the participants and corrupt whatever could be good in the relationship. (8)

Notice how interactions with a toxic person makes you feel. No healthy relationship should cause you to feel:

1. Physically or emotionally drained after spending time together;
2. Reduced confidence in yourself or enjoyment of your life;
3. Guilt for not doing more to solve their problems;
4. Confused about your boundaries or beliefs;
5. Frustrated that your needs, thoughts, and feelings don’t matter. (9)

Research shows that toxic people drive your brain into a stressed-out state. (10)

### Common Toxic Traits:

- Deceiver: Flimsy moral standards; deceit; dishonesty; “shades the truth.” Creates mistrust, chaos, and uncertainty. (13)
- Control Freak: Uptight; judgmental; invasive; impossible standard. Give up peace-of-mind, independence, and self-respect. (15)
- Gaslighter: Doubt your own memory, judgment or perceptions. Second-guess yourself, overly apologize, afraid to speak up. (17)
- Angry Venter: Pattern of heated verbal or physical rants; Treats others as punching bags. Keep gathering steam under pressure. (19)
- Know-It-All: Right about everything; oppressive dynamic; triggered competitiveness. Mistreatment by disregarding your own decision and giving into the other. (20)
- Intimidator: Asserts control by issuing threats. Doles out consequences greater than the situation warrants, which breeds resentment, bitterness, and anger. (22)
- Egotist: Insatiable desire to demonstrate self-importance; boost self-esteem. Proudful; arrogant; prideful; boastful. Centered on their own agenda. (24)
- Drama Queen/Crisis King: Continually centered in an intense storm; orchestrate conflict; insert self into chaos. (25)
- Put-Down Artist: Uses words or tone to degrade and devalue. Inconsiderate language; sarcastic; demean through words (27)
- Moral Authority: Launches into sermons and touts God and/or religion to force compliance. Self-appointed authorities of God. (28)
- Emotional Roller Coaster: Continual motion of mood swings; unregulated emotions; unchecked intensity. Creates a wild ride for others. (31)
- Pessimistic: Gloomy; persistent heartache; negative outlook; discontented perspective. Foul moods spill over onto those around them. (33)

- Guilter: Place blame; use false guilt to control; avoid self-accountability. Project causes of pain onto others. (34)
- Addict: Distort truth and create false realities to cover their needs or actions. Erratic decisions; unreliability; irritability; mood swings; dishonesty. (38)

**Signs of a Toxic Person:**

1. Truth-telling is not a high priority.
2. Lack of emotional intelligence.
3. Talks way too much and listens way too little.
4. Always needs to be right.
5. Constant drama.
6. Signs of addiction or dependency.
7. Conversation salted with sarcasm.
8. Victim mentality.
9. Mistreatment of service workers.
10. Grandiose stories.
11. Tries to control. (41)

Knowing a person's motives is often a necessary first step in recognizing and naming toxic behavior for what it is. (50)

**Elusive Reasons for Toxic Behaviors:**

1. They enjoy it.
2. Toxic behavior runs in the family.
3. They derive some "benefit" from toxic behavior.
  - a. Safety and control
  - b. Attention
  - c. Winning by any means
4. They never emerged from emotional adolescence.
5. They are compensating for an underlying emotional or mental illness.

**Signs of being manipulated:**

1. You're always the one who is "wrong."
2. You get the silent treatment.
3. You feel like a power struggle is underway and your power is in short supply.
4. The person turns on charm to gain some advantage.
5. The person acts like a martyr or victim.
6. You are sent on frequent guilt trips.
7. It's implied (or said) that you're selfish when you don't submit or agree.
8. The individual denies culpability.
9. Manipulators minimize your problems or concerns.
10. The person will frequently withhold. (65)

Evaluate if you should hang in or move on. (70) Four questions to assess:

1. Does the toxic behavior involve physical or psychological abuse?

2. Is the other person willing to take responsibility for his or her actions?
3. Is the damage so severe that your relationship forever be hampered?
4. Can you ever truly get along with this person again?

Try writing a personal mission statement that defines your standards, values, boundaries, and aspirations as a bridge-builder. (75)

### **Productive Discussions:**

1. Have a vision.
2. Use “I” statements.
3. Ask questions first.
4. Listen actively.
5. Consider your tone.
6. Be aware of body language.
7. Focus on the behavior. (Differentiate between criticism of a person and a behavior.)

### **Setting Boundaries:**

1. Keep it simple.
2. Write it down.
3. Choose the right time.
4. Set the stage.
5. Stay calm. (81)

Holding Boundaries: 1. Be consistent. 2. Be firm. (Differentiate between assertiveness and aggressiveness.) 3. Be grateful. (82)

Take inventory to assess the balance of power in a relationship. Weigh out the “Rights” and “Responsibilities” each person has in the relationship. (84)

### **Avoid being a people pleaser:**

1. Embrace the idea that healthy relationships are balanced.
2. Nurture your confidence and self-worth: a. Strengthening friendships; b. Pursuing adventure; c. Practicing self-care; d. Prioritizing what brings joy and meaning.
3. Rehearse speaking in truth.
4. Stop thinking of boundaries as an attempt to control others.
5. Accept that being liked by everyone is impossible.
6. Act out of choice, not compulsion.
7. Develop new habits by practicing every day. (87)

The only path to peace is forgiveness by turning bitterness into kindness and resentment into compassion. You claim victory over your enemies by refusing to participate in the war. (89)

Living grace-full means living risky and at peace with the risk. (91)

### **Healthy problem-solving:**

1. The goal is to resolve the problem, not to win.
2. Some problems won't go away on their own.

3. Be open to unique solutions.
4. Forgive yourself and others.
5. Accept that life is not always fair.
6. Deal with one problem at a time.
7. Anticipate a positive outcome.
8. Believe in your ability to solve the problem.
9. When working through problems, be away of how you're communicating to yourself and to others. (94)

**Reclaim personal power. Remember yourself:**

1. I am \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I love \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I don't like \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I want \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I need \_\_\_\_\_. (95)

Reclaiming your personal power isn't just finding a way to say yes to the things you really want. It is also finding a way to say no to the things other people really want from or for you, even if those things are good.

**Dealing with criticism:**

1. Consider the critic.
2. Evaluate if the person is a chronic faultfinder or typically an encourager.
3. Assess if there is an agenda at play.
4. Notice how the criticism was delivered.
5. Remain open, even if you don't want to.
6. Respond, don't react.
7. Let the dust settle.
8. Evaluate your wisest approach.
9. Decide if you should own it or let it go.
10. Determine what change is desired.
11. Reframe the terms.
12. Get a third opinion.
13. Tell yourself the truth.
14. Ask for a positive comment.
15. Practice self-acceptance. (101)