

6 Ways to Confront Toxic People

It only took a matter of days for me to devour the book.

Once finished, I went through it once more because I knew two things to be true:

1. I was a toxic person
2. My life was filled with toxic people

The question now arose: “How do I become a safe person and what do I do about these toxic relationships?” I will address the first question on Wednesday, but today I want to look at what we should do with the toxic people in our lives.

Do we try to salvage the relationship, or should we put them behind us and move on?

My knee-jerk reaction was to put them all behind me and move on. All of them. But I knew this wasn't a healthy way to deal with every relationship. Certainly, there are times when this approach is necessary for our health and well-being, but there are times when that approach isn't at all appropriate.

Let us not forget that God has given us abundant grace, not to consume upon ourselves but to give liberally to those around us.

Grace needs to flow from every decision—whether we let a relationship go or whether we attempt to salvage it.

How do we determine which approach needs to be taken?

1. List all the toxic people in your life and where they fit in your circles of friendship. Are they family members, school friends, neighbors, church family? Ask yourself, is the circle

they are currently in appropriate for the relationship they have to you? If not, perhaps just moving them to the outermost circle is the right move.

This doesn't require a conversation or confrontation about appropriate boundaries, unless they are actually infringing on your boundaries. If they have simply shown a disinterest in your life, let them be a casual acquaintance to you.

2. List the kind of behavior that is toxic in this person. Certain behaviors are more tolerable than others as long as they remain in the outer or outermost circles. Other behaviors are not at all tolerable and should be confronted.

3. Ask yourself, "Does this behavior warrant confrontation?" If it does, then ask yourself, "Have I confronted this person already about this behavior? Were they open to my confrontation?" If the person was not open to confrontation, ask yourself whether it was your approach or their lack of desire to be approached at all.

These three steps will help you determine what approach needs to be taken with the toxic relationships in your life.

You should now have three categories:

1. People from whom I need to walk away
2. People who simply need to be moved to my outermost circle
3. People whom I need to confront

Let's take a look at the third option: *people whom I need to confront*. How do we approach this confrontation in a way that will be acceptable?

Six Tips for Confronting Toxic People

1. Know what you are confronting. Sit down and write down concrete behavior that you need to confront, but leave

feelings out of it. This person isn't responsible for your feelings, they are responsible for their behavior. Before you determine your approach, determine what it is that initiating your approach.

2. Determine your boundaries. What behavior is and is not acceptable to you by this person? Do they have a tendency to gossip? Set a boundary about what is appropriate to talk about, but also let them know what is no longer appropriate. Part of being a safe person is letting those in your life know what pleases and displeases you, so they know how they can please you. Boundaries are essential in every relationship.

What makes relationships insecure is when both parties do not reveal their boundaries so there is no way to determine what makes each party happy or unhappy. Inevitably one party will step on a landmine and the relationship is put in jeopardy.

3. Pray for a heart of love. If you do steps 1 and 2 and then rush out to confront this person, your approach will most likely be unacceptable. Confrontation void of love is harsh and offensive. It is unable to be received, even by the most open person. Before you set out to confront this person, humbly pray for the Lord to give you supernatural love and humility in your approach, remembering that we are *all* recipients of rich grace.

4. Guard your boundaries and stand your ground. Your life, your relationships, and your emotional well-being are your property entrusted to you by God. It is your responsibility and right to place boundaries around them and then defend those boundaries. It is irresponsible to allow or enable toxic people to run roughshod over what God has placed in your care.

5. Give them time. Change doesn't happen overnight. A part of learning to extend grace is remembering that true, lasting change is like weight loss, slow and steady wins the race! Give the Holy Spirit time to convict their hearts and work in

their lives. If you're expecting instant results you'll be disappointed. Also remember that the work happening in the depths of the heart won't be immediately reflected on the outside. Like ripples in a deep ocean, it takes time for that change deep inside to be reflected on the surface.

6. Learn the humility of forgiveness. You've confronted, you've prayed and you've waited. But nothing is happening. Do you continue to wait or walk away and move on? Only you can decide what you should do. However one thing we all must do is forgive. Forgiveness doesn't validate their behavior, forgiveness releases them from our judgement and us from our prison. Bitterness is a prison of torture in which we choose to lock ourselves. Forgiveness sets us free from that prison. But it does more than that; it releases the other person from our judgment of them. Unforgiveness literally says, "God forgives you, but I won't" as we repeat the same sin that Lucifer committed when he assumed he was higher than God.

When you free yourself by forgiving those who have violated your boundaries, you are able to view them through a much clearer prism and that clarity will help you discern what God would have you do from here.

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