

How to Tell if Your Friendship Has Turned Toxic

We all have—or have had—a toxic friend in our life.

The friend who lives in constant drama or who is clingy and manipulative. After hanging out with them, we feel wrung out, discouraged and drained of all emotional energy.

But sometimes we have toxic friendships, and we're not even aware they are toxic.

But slowly over time, it takes its toll. We grow insecure and critical ... we sometimes even turn into a mean girl.

It was inevitable.

I would walk away from a conversation happy and bubbly, but then the moment would hit.

Panic. Disappointment. Self-loathing.

"Why did you say that? What must they think of you! You always say such stupid things. They will probably tell everyone they know what an idiot you are!"

These horrible thoughts would flood my heart as the joy I had felt moments before slowly vanished in the thick cloud of depression that would settle over me.

To be sure, no one but me was to blame for my horrible insecurity. I would feed on these thoughts, send frantic text messages apologizing for whatever it was that I had said. I was a toxic friend.

However, there was another element in my life that contributed to this battle I waged in my mind.

Other toxic people I had allowed in my inner circle.

Toxic people often attract toxic people!

My inner circle was filled with people who fed this negativity with their own judgmental attitudes, pessimism and gossip. And I entertained it all.

I listened to their judgmental declarations, pessimistic viewpoints and gossip, and then lived in fear that one day *I* would be the topic of conversation.

Those who gossip to you will eventually gossip about you.

The fear was so real that I could almost feel the condemnation in their eyes. This is what happens when we surround ourselves with toxic people.

And it is true that those who gossip to us will one day gossip about us.

So how can we know if we are a toxic friend or have toxic people in our lives and how do deal with those toxic people? Today I share with you nine traits of a toxic friendship, and in the next article we will look at how to deal with toxic people in our lives.

Here Are 9 Traits of a Toxic Friendship

1. Your friend demands your trust. Simply put, trust cannot be demanded: despite position or title. Trust must be earned. One can have respect for a position without respect for the person who fills that position, but this respect is still not considered trust. Trust is earned based on one's ability to be trustworthy, and a friend who demands your trust is not trustworthy. A healthy friend will never demand your trust.

2. You don't leave feeling encouraged and inspired. Does time with this friend make you feel depressed, pessimistic, defensive, belittled, used or inadequate? Do you often feel like you are treated like a child when you're around them? Healthy friendships should encourage and build us up. The type

of behavior that leaves you with negative feelings should be an indicator that some boundaries are needed, and this person is not someone who should be allowed in your inner circle.

3. Your friend often mocks others. Mocking is a clear sign of toxicity. A person who mocks is simply not a healthy person to be around. Sometimes mocking isn't always very clear, so pay attention to the way your friend talks about others. Is it with honor and respect, or do they put others down with little comments, slights or a laugh? If so, this person is not a person to be trusted.

4. Your friend is a gossip. Remember what I said earlier? Those who gossip to you will eventually gossip about you. Beware of a friendship that feeds on gossip because it will eventually self-destruct. Besides, the Bible calls gossip an abomination. If your friend betrays confidential conversations or shares with you information you know was not meant to be public, you can be 100 percent certain your friend is a toxic friend. A healthy person is a fierce protector of their other friendships—and of yours!

5. Your friend is jealous and controlling. There are some people who want to keep a friendship all to themselves because they fear that if you have other friends, you will eventually abandon them. Usually this fear will drive them be jealous and controlling of the time you spend with others. While to some their jealousy may seem flattering at first, it will blossom until they smother you with exclusivity. Beware of a person who wants you to be their exclusive friend. A healthy person will encourage you to build friendships with those around you.

6. Your friend is defensive. The Bible says a true friendship is like iron sharpening iron. Now, this doesn't mean friendship should be based on confrontation. That's unhealthy. But in every friendship confrontation will eventually take place because no one is perfect. The blessing of a friendship-confrontation is that a healthy friend confronts in love and

always has our best interest at heart. If “truth in love” is met with a defensive attitude—and consistently so—then this is not a healthy friendship. A healthy person is someone who is able to take confrontation and process it because they are humble enough to recognize their own imperfections. A toxic person is not willing to own up to their faults when confronted.

The dichotomy here is that often a toxic person is self-loathing and will make a joke of their own faults because they are able to make themselves the butt of their own jokes, but the toxicity is evident when someone else brings up a fault and is met with a defensive attitude.

7. Your friend must always be right. If your friend leaves no room for error, they are not a person you want to spend a significant amount of time around. We all know that no one can be right 100 percent of the time, but a toxic person leaves no room for error in their life, because being wrong will demand they admit that someone else is possibly better than they. This is not acceptable because a toxic person must always be best.

8 Your friend lies. Obviously you cannot trust someone who lies. And if your friend lies, they are not trustworthy. A toxic person will often lie so as not to appear to be imperfect; because as I said earlier, a toxic person must always be the best. So they will often cover up their failures with lies. This person has no place in your inner circle.

9. Your friend only talks about their own problems. If your friend has no interest in talking about you, or getting to know you, then he or she is not a person you want to make an investment in. A toxic person is always ready for someone to invest in them, their dreams, their visions, their ambitions, but when it comes time for them to invest in someone else, they are suddenly AWOL. If your friend either neglects reaching out to you or is suspiciously absent when it comes to

investing in you, your dreams, your visions and your ambitions, it's time to rethink your friendship.

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