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## TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS

Some of us have read about them. Many of us have been in them. We all worry about them. And the question we all want to know how to answer is: *What do we do about them?*

But first, let's step back. What is a toxic relationship? The strict definition of toxic (per Merriam-Webster Dictionary) is: **containing or being poisonous material.....extremely harsh, malicious, or harmful**. When we couple toxic with relationship, what do we get? A relationship that is duplicitous, unproductively critical, manipulative, controlling, blaming, subordinating and disrespectful. And that's just the start of a much longer list of descriptive qualities. However, the common denominator for all toxic relationships is that they are all – toxic.

Let's now revisit the question: *What can we do if we are in a toxic relationship?*

1. This may sound counterintuitive, but the first thing to do is to take responsibility for our own actions. Yes, that's right. It's easy to jump into the 'it's all his/her fault paradigm' and by doing so, neglect our own contributions to the problem. It's difficult, but essential, to first do some self-study and make sure that whatever we are doing to start, continue or worsen a toxic relationship is stopped in its tracks.
2. The second thing to do is to decide whether or not the relationship can be improved

or saved. This will depend on the answers to questions such as: Will clear and honest communication about the problem be helpful? Will it be productive to seek help from a professional or other third party?

3. If the relationship can be improved or saved, every effort should be devoted to that task.
4. If the relationship cannot be improved or saved, plans should be made, if possible, to extricate oneself from the toxic relationship. Staying in a toxic relationship that cannot be improved or saved is deleterious

to one's mental health, just like ingesting a toxic substance would be deleterious to one's physical health.

5. If we cannot extricate ourselves from the toxic relationship for any one of a variety of reasons – e.g. family, financial, work reasons – we need to maintain a critical awareness of the cost of staying in the relationship and ways to guard against insidious internalization of the inherent negativity involved. Some simple

ways that might help are:

- \*\* keep interactions to a minimum and only when essential
- \*\* stay positive even when the feedback or interaction is negative
- \*\* take the high road and give yourself kudos every time you take the high road

Please note that if there is any physical or emotional abuse, you need to extricate yourself from the toxic relationship.



# 2012

JANUARY							JULY						
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## Notes:

- Jan 16: Martin L King Day
- Feb 20: Presidents' Day
- Apr 06: Good Friday
- Apr 08: Easter Sunday
- May 13: Mother's Day
- May 28: Memorial Day
- Jun 17: Father's Day
- Jul 04: Independence Day
- Sep 03: Labor Day
- Oct 08: Columbus Day
- Oct 31: Halloween
- Nov 11: Veterans Day
- Nov 22: Thanksgiving Day
- Dec 25: Christmas Day