

How Do You Deal With Toxic People in Your Life?

Romans 12:14: (NASB) *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*

Sometimes we have people in our lives who seem to create difficulty wherever they go. This can be for a variety of reasons, including the fact that WE could actually be attracting such folks into our experiences. For now, let's assume that there are some people who simply live unhappy and unfulfilled lives. In their search for feelings of significance, they become a drain to others. Being in their presence diminishes hope, poisons happiness and upsets relationships. Their influence quietly becomes a centerpiece or even an obsession in our daily experience. What do we do? Should we walk away or tell them off or mount an attack of our own? What is the Christian thing to do? How does the Bible guide us through such extreme circumstances?



Every example, every Scripture and every thought expressed here must be applied with full knowledge that we must examine ourselves deeply for our own internal and external faults as we consider how others may be treating us.

 **Diagnose, Wellcast: *Toxic People: How to End a Bad Relationship*, watchwellcast**

- Sometimes we get into relationships that drain energy from us. These are toxic relationships, and they can negatively affect all aspects of our lives. On this week's Wellcast we're going to show you how you can tell if you're even in a toxic relationship, and then we're going to help you extricate yourself from that unhealthy situation pronto. Selfie 1: diagnose the relationship. How do you know if a friend or partner is bringing you down? Well, in much the same way that you know that you're coming down with a cold. Toxic relationships come with symptoms. When you're around this person, how do you feel? Here are a few other questions you should ask yourself if you're thinking you might be in a toxic situation. Does my friend put me down all the time? Are they jealous when I spend time with others? Do they constantly bring up parts of me that they want to change? Do they take more than they give? Am I only doing the things that they want to do?*



For more on this topic, please search our archives for Episode #1007 "Do We Have to Turn the Other Cheek?"



Matthew 5:39: (NASB) *But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.*

Whoever slaps you - this means what it says - a literal slap - and can also mean to strike with a rod or staff.

The next phrase is where we need to begin to ask questions. *On your right cheek* - why not on the left cheek? Does this mean if we are hit on the left cheek, all bets are off and we can hit him back? Why the right cheek?

"cqbiblepodcast"



We asked on Facebook, "How can you encourage someone who is always negative/toxic?" Maria answered: We must be positive, otherwise we do not share with the standard put before us. It would be good to see in our brothers and sisters their qualities to follow and their imperfections to overlook them, knowing that we also have weaknesses.

Everybody is weak and we are part of that "everybody." We do not want to point the finger at everyone else without examining ourselves.



Context from a few verses earlier:

Matthew 5:29-30: (NASB) ²⁹*If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you....* ³⁰*If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you.*

Throughout the Bible, the right side was always considered the side of honor, power and authority.

The right hand of the throne of God - (similar expression found in Acts 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3, 8:1, 10:12 and other places) is a symbol of the most highly honored place.

A scepter in his right hand is a symbol of power and authority.

The right side gives the sense of the strongest power and authority.

More on this in the CQ Rewind Bonus Material.

The word *right* does mean "right," but look at the metaphorical clarification the Greek English Lexicon gives it:

Right: Greek English Lexicon 1) the right, the right hand; 2) a place of honor or authority

This section of Matthew 5 focuses on the absolute importance of self-control in all circumstances.

- *Your right eye* - a symbol of the source of your most powerful and authoritative **observations**. If it brings you to lust, then be rid of such powerful and authoritative observations. *Your right eye* is the best version of "you." If that in any way brings you to inappropriate desires, then get rid of it. Do not coddle it; get rid of it. What you observe must be in line with Christlikeness.
- *Your right hand* - a symbol of the source of your most powerful and authoritative **actions**. If it brings you to any measure of compromised experience, then be rid of such powerful and authoritative actions. Hands symbolize actions. Do not coddle it; get rid of it.



- *Your right cheek* - the most powerful and authoritative representation of **yourself**. If someone humiliates this representation of you, *accept it with grace*, for this is sacrifice. This is a metaphor for someone insulting us, humiliating us, the best representation of us. This is hard to take, but we are to accept it.

In other words, we are to have self-control in all circumstances, especially when someone is attacking our reputation, who we are. He is not saying to absorb it; he is saying we should handle it. There is a difference.

(Source: Eclectic Notes on the Bible) "Smite thee on thy right cheek," giving one's cheek to the smiter was a Hebrew proverb for meek submission.

Jesus taught meek submission using figurative language.

This literally happened to Jesus:

Isaiah 50:6: (NASB) *I gave my back to those who strike me, and my cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover my face from humiliation and spitting.* (See also Lamentations 3:30.)

Jesus submitted himself to these things. Why and how? More on this later.



Our core strength for taming toxicity comes from the words of Jesus and his example of handling the harshness of others with an eye towards the greater good.

We are not supposed to just "take it," but we are supposed to learn to "handle it." This is a tough lesson.

Does "handling it" from a toxic person mean we willingly become a target for their abusive actions?

It is far too easy to say, just take it. It is also far too easy to want to walk away from a toxic person. If you are a Christian, neither of these is the right answer. Jesus did not just "take it" from those who abused him. He allowed it for a greater good. He also did not allow it until his time had come.

What is the best way to handle toxic people when we **MUST** have them in our lives?

Toxic people defy logic. Some are blissfully unaware of the negative impact that they have on those around them, and others seem to derive satisfaction from creating chaos and pushing other people's buttons. — Travis Bradberry



Over the past year and a half, such a case became evident to my wife, Jewel, and me. The first warning sign happened when we went to help family members clean my parent's house after construction debris was causing medical issues for my dad. In the middle of cleaning their house and removing an old carpet from my mom and dad's bedroom, a family member accused me

of not living like a good Christian because I wouldn't take up her cause of preventing child trafficking and did not follow her political ideas. She felt her cause was far more important than mine, which is developing Christlikeness, sacrifice and doing God's will as I believe I was called to do. I was accused of NOT being a Christian!

To be honest, I did not handle these accusations well at all. In fact, I blew up. I yelled back and basically told her, "How dare you push your agenda on me," and I started defending my Christian walk.

As this was happening, the Lord's Spirit revealed to me - (by this person's facial expressions) - how pleased she was to know how to push my buttons to get a reaction from me. From this FAILURE on my part, the Lord gave me strength to not react to this person again, as this was the beginning of a year-and-a-half nightmare.

Without this mistake, I probably would have done greater damage later throughout our experience. I am thankful for the humbling I received from the Lord in preparation for what was to come.

We will use Romans 12:14-21 to build the case for *righteous responses* to toxicity.



Always be a giver but always give appropriately. Depersonalize the abuse.

Romans 12:14-16: (NASB) ¹⁴*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.* ¹⁵*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.* ¹⁶*Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind but associate with the lowly...*

Bless and do not curse - how did Jesus *bless* those who persecuted him? He did not condone or encourage their behavior, but he did die for them so they could eventually learn consequences and forgiveness in the resurrection.

Jesus did not just "take" it. During his ministry, he responded to his toxic critics and spoke to them with truth. He was trying to get the Pharisees to act in accordance with the "spirit" of the Law and not the "letter" of the Law. This is how he blessed them. He gave them what they needed to hear, not what they wanted to hear.

Quora

How should we handle toxic people? Bill contributes: I am at peace with avoiding them. Do not hate them, just avoid them, if I can. From where I come from, I need to recognize myself as equally important and valuable as others. When my relationship with others leaves me routinely feeling bad and depressed, it is okay to avoid.

(Source: Psychology Today: *8 Strategies for Dealing with the Toxic People in Your Life*, by Peg Streep) 1. Recognize the traits that make you easy prey. Use cool processing to think about the interactions you've had with the person that make you unhappy - focusing on why you felt as you did, not what you felt - and see if you can discern a pattern.



Recognize, Wellcast: Toxic People: How to End a Bad Relationship, watchwellcast

- *Selfie 2: Recognize your role in the relationship. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent." (Alright, look, we know we got that from "Princess Diaries," obviously.) Moving on. You have autonomy in every relationship in your life. If your friend or partner is stealing your sunshine, you need to figure out what you're doing to allow them to do this. Are you being a doormat? Are you putting this person's emotional needs ahead of your own health?*



We have to recognize the truth of the matter. *Bless those who persecute you* does not mean we necessarily give them what they want, but we give them what is good and righteous in God's eyes.

2. Explore your reactivity. Again, without taking the blame for the dynamic, you should look at both the degree to which you overreact and underreact in the relationship; either can unwittingly intensify the dynamic and keep it going.

A toxic relationship keeps on going because we usually do not know how to stop it. Our suggestions here today will not necessarily stop it, but it will help us to handle it, not absorb it. We must depersonalize the abuse. By handling it, we give potential for something positive to come out of it.

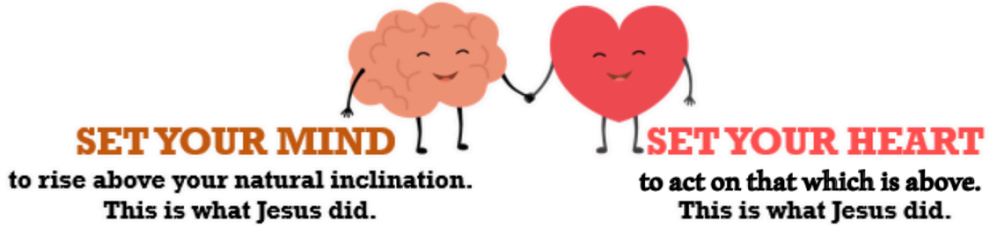
We are ALL faulty and therefore all susceptible to giving and receiving toxicity:

1 Corinthians 1:26-29: (NASB) ²⁶For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, ²⁹so that no man may boast before God.

We are chosen because we are not the "cream of the crop." God is to be glorified, not us. By God's grace, we are going to handle toxicity, not absorb it or fight it.

Within the grand opportunity of the Christian calling to give glory to God is the grave reality that we have so much to overcome. We do not begin this walk with any natural advantage.

How do we appropriately give to a toxic person?



Matthew 5:43: (NASB) ⁴³You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

Matthew 5:44-45: (NASB) ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

God treats all with equity and appropriate giving. When we love (agape love, the highest form of love) someone, how do we treat them? We ultimately want the best for them.

Matthew 5:48: (NASB) *Therefore you are to be perfect (Lexicon: consummate human integrity and virtue), as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

In other words, we are to rise to the highest level we can. When fighting with toxicity, we need to be able to bless appropriately. How do we do that?



Our treatment of those who would be toxic in our lives comes down to blessing them which means we give to them appropriately. Depersonalize the abuse.

Wanting what is best for someone is a great way to frame our relationships with difficult people.

**To bless and give appropriately sounds great,
but in all practicality, how do you actually go and do it?**

This is one of those areas of life that requires not only thought and acceptance, but it requires practice as well. To truly give in an appropriate way means that we must first have a clear understanding of what is appropriate and then decide to fully commit to it. This is practically an art form.

How do we handle being treated with blatant disrespect? Ignore it? Absorb it? Keep it quiet?

Don't let people pull you into their storms. Pull them into your peace. — Unknown

The toxic person has a storm rising in their heart and mind. They are hurting. Instead of being pulled into their storm, pull them into your peace. We have to first have peace which comes from something bigger than ourselves.



After this warning sign experience, we realized many other inconsistencies in the behavior and thought patterns of this person. This led us to our concern for the care, or lack thereof, for my parents who were being cared for by her. Instead of being a help to my mom and dad, she was causing distress, anxiety and depression. To give Mom and Dad a break from that environment, we invited them to visit for a month. What started out as a four-week-visit turned into much more. Dad had advanced Alzheimer's and Mom asked if they could stay and live with us. Jewel and I discussed it and agreed it was the right thing to do, especially since the Scriptures say we are to honor our father and mother.

We brought my parents back to their house to explain their future plans and to pack. That is when toxicity revealed itself. Threats were made to my parents and they were told they could not leave. Threats were made to my wife and me if we attempted to bring them to Connecticut. Instead of honoring Mom's wishes, this person wanted to control my parents and continue to receive free room and board.

Due to the toxicity, on moving day we needed a police escort to safely get Mom and Dad out of the house. This was followed by a year of evil and hateful texts, emails and phone calls. How did we deal with that toxicity? Communicating with her was not an option due to her reactions. We did not respond to her even though it was very stressful. What we did do was pray for her and hoped she would seek professional help. Other family members were not able to help her either.



Always be humble. Always be righteous. Always be respectful.

Romans 12:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶...not be wise in your own estimation. ¹⁷Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

Appropriate responses are NOT often natural. Dealing with toxicity means we have to rise above what we FEEL to do what is right.

What is *right in the sight of all men*? This is a challenge in our society to find the standard for righteousness. Our standards must be godly standards from the Bible.



Boundaries, Wellcast: Toxic People: How to End a Bad Relationship, watchwellcast

- *Selfie 3: Start to build boundaries for this relationship. Does your friend invite themselves over at all hours of the night? Are they constantly bossing you around? Are they always borrowing money from you? All right, once you know the boundary that you want to set, stick to it. Draw your line in the sand.*



Jonathan had to create boundaries of not communicating because it would create a flood of reaction. Not giving a platform to spew vitriol is blessing them.

(Source: Psychology Today, *8 Strategies for Dealing with the Toxic People in Your Life*, by Peg Streep) 3. Trust your gut. One reason insecurely-attached people stay in hurtful relationships is a lack of trust in themselves or their judgment.

We as Christians need to be very careful with this! Which "gut" are we to trust?

1 Corinthians 2:11-12: (WEY) ¹¹For, among human beings, who knows a man's inner thoughts except the man's own spirit within him... ¹²But we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which comes forth from God, that we may know the blessings that have been so freely given to us by God.

This is our basis for trusting our gut - trusting godliness. We trust the godly principles Jesus gave us. We are to rise above the base responses to do something stronger.

4. Beware of the sunk cost fallacy. Humans are famously loss averse, and prefer to hold onto what they have in the short term - even if giving up a little will get them more in the long run.

Even more care must be taken here. There are some relationships that should NOT be abandoned:

1 Corinthians 2:14: (NASB) *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*

The implication that walking away is healthy is not necessarily appropriate for the Christian in every case. What many would say is a "sunk cost fallacy," for us may be an obligation that needs to be met with commitment. We need to be clear and stay the course, handling it without absorbing it.

Bless and love with an intentional objective:

1 Peter 3:8,9: (NASB) ⁸To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; ⁹not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

When we (agape) love someone, we say and do what is best for them and not what is convenient or comfortable.



Using the idea of a sandwich is a good way to establish a base for communication. When we have something hard to say to someone, put it in "sandwich" form. Say something positive. Then say the difficult part, but end with something positive.

Approach others with a sense of respect and blessing. Tell them what they need to hear but in the right kind of way.



Someone misrepresented the experience of someone close to me. I know that, because I was with the person during this experience. I saw firsthand everything that happened. In a public place, this toxic individual was talking about this other person in a horrible way and it was simply untrue. I stopped them and said, "Hang on, I was there. Let me explain to you what actually happened, because I don't think you have it right." I explained it but they kept getting worse and worse. I was more firm: "You don't understand what I

just said. You can't be right, because I WAS THERE." They had heard the story from third parties who were not there. They would not stop. They were hurting the reputation of someone I deeply care about. I firmly said, "You had better stop talking about this person because you are speaking what is not true and it is damaging their character. This is wrong. Stop doing it." At that moment, the individual I spoke to finally broke down and apologized, but it took all of that effort to get there. I wanted to stand for someone who was being misrepresented. This was blessing them, even though it was not easy.



1 Peter 3:15-17: (NASB) ¹⁵but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; ¹⁶and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

Suffer for doing what is right - if we contribute to toxicity, we are not suffering for that which is right. Bless them. Give them wisdom. Give them God's mercy and truth. Sometimes the truth is difficult. Give it to them in a receivable way. Hand it to them as a verbal "sandwich" and ask them to consider it. Perhaps you can begin to chip away at their toxicity. This might be a long road, but we must be committed to righteousness, goodness and mercy.

If we are going to be challenged, we might as well be challenged while doing things God's way:

2 Corinthians 10:3-5: (NASB) ³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Every thought captive - includes the thoughts we have when we are face-to-face with that toxic person. Bless them by speaking appropriately, wisely and truthfully.



Our responses to toxicity should never be reactions but, rather, God-honoring. Aim to build a basis for communication.



**As positive as building a communication base is,
what do we do with our natural desire to lash out?**

When we are verbally or emotionally attacked, we react with either a fight-or-flight response. Some of us want to dish back what we have been dished - with a little bit extra, and some of us just let the abuse pulverize our hearts. While our *reactions* may not change, we can control our *responses*.

Is it EVER acceptable for a Christian to retaliate? Wouldn't retaliation help the toxic person see what they are doing?

Toxic people attach themselves like cinder blocks tied to your ankles, and then invite you for a swim in their poisoned waters. — John Mark Green



Mom did not want to worry about the house out of state anymore and they were paying utility bills which tripled *after* they left. Mom decided she wanted to sell the house. The experience escalated by this family member taking Mom and Dad to court to try and take their house from them. The judge told her she had no right to the house, and she was asked to leave. After many months and requests, she unfortunately was evicted so the realtors could put the house on the market. This was a very difficult experience for all.

Many months later, my dad was diagnosed with an abdominal aortic aneurysm and hospice was called into the house to help. Toxicity showed itself again when this person actually called the police and told them my dad was unconscious and they needed to rescue him. Of course, the police came in and saw Dad in a hospital bed being taken care of by us, caregivers and hospice nurses. The policeman was embarrassed but had to follow through checking on Dad because of the report. This added stress and heartbreak to an already difficult situation.

Dad passed away a week later. We are thankful to the Lord that very little of her toxicity showed itself at my dad's memorial service in my parent's hometown. There were over 90 people there to honor him. But toxicity reared its ugly head when it was over in the parking lot. She walked up behind me while I was putting my mom's wheelchair in the trunk and started pounding on my back and being verbally abusive. With the Lord's help and strength, I thought about Jesus, and I did not say a word or react. I just finished and got in the car. It was a privilege to experience the tiniest bit of what Jesus may have felt when persecuted for righteousness. She did not get the reaction she wanted, but God did.

There is power in not contributing to the toxic behavior.

She wanted a fight but was given nothing. This was a victory for godliness instead of toxicity.



Leave retaliation to God.
He will see to it on time and appropriately. Do not play the game.

Romans 12:18-20: (NASB) ¹⁸*If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. ¹⁹Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. ²⁰but if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink: for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.*

We are to have a righteous approach towards our enemies. Our communications with them are not to contribute to bitter criticism and anger. Rise above playing their game. Do not accept toxic behavior. Give them a "sandwich" and let them know their behavior is not welcome.

Heap burning coals on his head - it was a sign of hospitality to give a person leaving your house hot coals to carry back home so they could quickly have a warm fire. This was a kindness shown.

We have a choice as to what we contribute to a volatile situation. Choose grace.

 **No more doormat, Wellcast: Toxic People: How to End a Bad Relationship, watchwellcast**

- *Selfie 4: Recognize you can't change other people, but you can stop being a doormat. If you have determined that a friendship or relationship is toxic, you know that you have to change the nature of that relationship. Start by spending less time with that person and do your best to detach yourself emotionally. Hopefully setting boundaries will help you begin to phase this relationship out.*

We cannot change someone, but we can change how we contribute to what is going on. If we rise above and choose to bless instead of curse, to respond instead of react, we can do things differently.

(Source: Psychology Today: *8 Strategies for Dealing with the Toxic People in Your Life*, by Peg Streep) 5. Recognize the power of intermittent reinforcement. When a toxic person actually does something nice, your heart leaps, your optimism ramps up, and you think, "We are turning a corner!" That locks you in for that much longer.

Beware, because the situation generally does not change quickly. Some people in this situation do not know how to stop being toxic. We all need help sometimes. Do not be afraid to seek wisdom from someone who is spiritually trustworthy.

6. Guard those boundaries or plan an exit strategy. If the toxic person is someone you can't avoid coming into contact with - a co-worker, a neighbor, your mother-in-law or someone in your social circle - set boundaries for behavior and the kind of contact you're going to have.

How can we set boundaries? Give the person a "sandwich."



 **Other people, Wellcast: Toxic People: How to End a Bad Relationship, watchwellcast**

Selfie 5: Get a second opinion. Especially if you're emotionally vulnerable, the best thing you can do is surround yourself with people who love you and who want you to be happy and healthy. Use them as a lifeline during this time.

Set your mind to respond with godly appropriateness and blessing, then resolve to work that plan.

King David had multiple issues with some who pursued him mercilessly and without reason. Here is how he presented his dilemma to God.

First, he asked God to do the fighting:

Psalms 35:1,4-7,12-14: (NASB) ¹Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me... ⁴Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life; let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me. ⁵Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the LORD driving them on. ⁶Let their way be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them. ⁷For without cause they hid their net for me; without cause they dug a pit for my soul. ¹²They repay me evil for good, to the bereavement of my soul.

Next, he reflected on his own attitude towards those who would hurt him:

¹³But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer kept returning to my bosom. ¹⁴I went about as though it were my friend or brother; I bowed down mourning, as one who sorrows for a mother.

David mourned for his enemies' hardship. We must have a similar heart.

True peace can only come to us when we use spiritually-sound thinking and decisions:

Philippians 4:4-7: (NASB) ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

It is hard not to be anxious when we are in the middle of the fire. We have to fight for peace. We choose what we do with the anxiousness so we do not contribute to the toxic behavior.



We cannot fix somebody, but we should look for open doors of opportunity.

**Bless appropriately, be humble and respectful,
and do not retaliate. Gee, is that all there is to it?**

Appropriateness, humility and no retaliation. When we just say the words that reflect what needs doing it never sounds too bad. We then add a sizable helping of reality and a heavy dose of emotion to the equation, and suddenly we are looking up a steep and intimidating mountain. What now?

What do we do when we just cannot take the toxic treatment anymore?



You can't change someone who doesn't see an issue in their actions. — Unknown

We cannot change anyone. Do not contribute to their downward trend; instead contribute to godliness by being a blessing. A blessing is not giving someone what they want, but what is appropriate and good for them and those around them from a godly perspective.

Do not quit! Even if you cannot help someone change here and now, you can, at the very least, create a better environment for communication and understanding.

Romans 12:21: (NASB) *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

It is not about changing the toxic people; it is about changing their role in our lives. We can only change ourselves. "I will no longer be a toxic contributor. I will be a toxicity overcomer." Lay the groundwork for future communication.

Overcoming evil with good is not necessarily about winning the actual battle as much as it is about changing your own perspective and actions to those of Christlikeness.

(Source: *Psychology Today: 8 Strategies for Dealing with the Toxic People in Your Life*, by Peg Streep) 7. Anticipate push-back or retaliation. It's likely that the toxic person in your life has his or her own "investment" in the connection—he likes controlling you, or she likes the lift her power over you gives her - so once you start setting boundaries and confronting the individual, don't expect him to go gently into the night.

It will not be easy, but we need to stand for what is true and right. Set an appropriate boundary with gentleness and firmness.

8. Don't normalize abusive behavior. This is especially important if you've been in a toxic relationship for a long time or you grew up around people who used words as weapons. The bottom line is that emotional and verbal abuse are never okay.



Love yourself, Wellcast: Toxic People: How to End a Bad Relationship, watchwellcast

- *Selfie 6: Above all else, look out for yourself. Studies have shown that people with low self-esteem are far more likely to find themselves in toxic relationships. You will never be treated with love and respect unless you absolutely believe that you deserve these things. Remember, you teach people how to treat you, so, do yourself the favor of loving yourself. That's the first step to any relationship.*

"You teach people how to treat you." If we are in a toxic relationship, maybe we have contributed and taught them it is okay. Now it is time for a new and higher lesson. By God's grace, and with wisdom, patience and love in our heart, we can teach them how to treat us more appropriately.

Never forget the purpose of our experiences as a Christian:

1 Peter 2:18-20: (NASB) ¹⁸*Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.* ¹⁹*For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.* ²⁰*For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.*

We may not be able to change the environment that surrounds us, but we may make adjustments on how we handle it without absorbing it. When we suffer for the sake of godly righteousness - *this finds favor with God.*

We must always remember that our journey is meant to be hard, just like Jesus' journey:

1 Peter 2:21-24: (NASB) ²¹*For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps,* ²²*who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth;* ²³*and while being reviled, he did not revile in return; while suffering, he uttered no threats, but kept entrusting himself to Him who judges righteously;* ²⁴*and he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by his wounds you were healed.*

Overcoming trials and tribulations makes our lives worthwhile, as we become stronger in character. No wonder Jesus is called *the author and finisher of our faith* - he did not falter or quit!

Dealing with toxic people does not mean we become someone's punching bag. Abusive behavior is not appropriate. If we have taught them by acceptance of their behavior, we need to retrain them how to treat us. We must look at ourselves the way God sees us. Do not let that toxic person's perspective of you influence your perspective of yourself.

When quitting seems attractive, we always need to go back to the promises to refocus our discipline:

Isaiah 40:29-31: (NASB) ²⁹*He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might he increases power.* ³⁰*Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly,* ³¹*Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.*

We need to apply God's strength in our lives to help us deal with toxic people. Promises in hand, always look up, find your balance and know you are being tried for a reason - to show your faithfulness. The experiences we have now are for an eternal glorification of God.

Philippians 4:8: (NASB) *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.*

We can easily dwell on what a toxic person tells us. Instead, we must put on things of value and that will lift us and others up. It is a paradigm shift that makes toxicity an accessory in life rather than a centerpiece.



Toxic people are products of this sinful world. Jesus died for them! Do not quit!

Dealing with toxicity is difficult.

We can make that toxic situation more tolerable and give glory to God if we:

- Consider godly principles
- Consider Jesus' example
- Learn to bless and not curse
- Learn to handle and not absorb the evil
- Give appropriate reactions instead of responses



*So, how do you deal with toxic people in your life?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on September 30, 2019:
Ep. #1093: Do Our Prayers Change God's Mind?

Bonus Material!

If you accept the expectations of others, especially negative ones, then you never will change the outcome. — Michael Jordan

Don't let toxic people infect you with the fear of giving and receiving one of the most powerful forces in this world... LOVE! — Yvonne Pierre

Here is how the Apostle Paul managed bad behavior towards him:

1 Corinthians 4:10-16: (NASB) ¹⁰We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. ¹¹To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; ¹²and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; ¹³when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have

become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now. ¹⁴I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. ¹⁶Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.

Matthew 5:38-42: (NASB) ³⁸You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. ³⁹But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt let him have your coat also. ⁴¹Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴²Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

Here is an interesting account of Israel and Judah. When Judah sinned against God, the ten tribes seemed to take it upon themselves to treat them harshly. The prophet Oded intervenes and basically says, "God is watching how you are treating your brothers so harshly and is not happy."

They reverse course and treat them respectfully:

2 Chronicles 28:8-15: (NASB) ⁸The sons of Israel carried away captive of their brethren 200,000 women, sons and daughters; and they took also a great deal of spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria. ⁹But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded; and he went out to meet the army which came to Samaria and said to them, Behold, because the LORD, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, He has delivered them into your hand, and you have slain them in a rage which has even reached heaven. ¹⁰Now you are proposing to subjugate for yourselves the people of Judah and Jerusalem for male and female slaves. Surely, do you not have transgressions of your own against the LORD your God? ¹¹Now therefore, listen to me and return the captives whom you captured from your brothers, for the burning anger of the LORD is against you. ¹²Then some of the heads of the sons of Ephraim—Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai—arose against those who were coming from the battle, ¹³and said to them, You must not bring the captives in here, for you are proposing to bring upon us guilt against the LORD adding to our sins and our guilt; for our guilt is great so that His burning anger is against Israel. ¹⁴So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the officers and all the assembly. ¹⁵Then the men who were designated by name arose, took the captives, and they clothed all their naked ones from the spoil; and they gave them clothes and sandals, fed them and gave them drink, anointed them with oil, led all their feeble ones on donkeys, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brothers; then they returned to Samaria.

Psalms Lesson: Leave all retaliation to God - keep those who have hurt you within your compassion:

Psalms 35:1-16: (NASB) ¹Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. ²Take hold of buckler and shield and rise up for my help. ³Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me; say to my soul, I am your salvation. ⁴Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life; let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me. ⁵Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the LORD driving them on. ⁶Let their way be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them. ⁷For without cause they hid their net for me; without cause they dug a pit for my soul. ⁸Let destruction come upon him unawares, and let the net which he hid catch himself; into that very destruction let him fall. ⁹And my soul shall rejoice in the LORD; it shall exult in His salvation. ¹⁰All my bones will say, LORD, who is like You, who delivers the afflicted from him who is too strong for him, and the afflicted and the needy from him who robs him? ¹¹Malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I do not know. ¹²They repay me evil for good, to the bereavement of my soul. ¹³But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer kept returning to my bosom. ¹⁴I went about as though it were my friend or brother; I bowed down mourning, as one who sorrows for a mother. ¹⁵But at my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered themselves together; the smiters whom I did not know gathered together against me, they slandered me without ceasing. ¹⁶Like godless jesters at a feast, they gnashed at me with their teeth.



(Source: Albert Barnes Commentary) There is nothing in the psalm itself that will enable us to determine with any accuracy the occasion on which it was written. By some, it has been referred to the time of the persecution of David by Saul; by others, to the opposition which he encountered from Ahithophel, or Shimei, or to the ingratitude of Mephibosheth; (2 Samuel 16:3) by others it has been referred to the rebellion of Absalom.

(Source: Matthew Henry Commentary)

- 1.) He complains to God of the injuries they did him; they strove with him, fought against him (Psalm 35:1), persecuted him (Psalm 35:3), sought his ruin (Psalm 35:4,7), accused him falsely (Psalm 35:11), abused him basely (Psalm 35:15-16), and all his friends (Psalm 35:20), and triumphed over him, (Psalm 35:21,25-26).
- 2.) He pleads his own innocency, that he never gave them any provocation (Psalm 35:7, 19), but, on the contrary, had studied to oblige them, (Psalm 35:12-14).
- 3.) He prays to God to protect and deliver him, and appear for him (Psalm 35:1-2), to comfort him (Psalm 35:3), to be nigh to him and rescue him (Psalm 35:17,22), to plead his cause (Psalm 35:23-24), to defeat all the designs of his enemies against him (Psalm 35:3-4), to disappoint their expectations of his fall (Psalm 35:19,25-26), and, lastly, to countenance all his friends, and encourage them, (Psalm 35:27).

(Source: Matthew Henry Commentary - verses 13-14)

- 1.) David mourned for them and sympathized with them in their grief. They were not related to him; he was under no obligations to them; he would lose nothing by their death, but perhaps be a gainer by it; and yet he behaved himself as though they had been his nearest relations, purely from a principle of compassion and humanity. David was a man of war, and of a bold stout spirit, and yet was thus susceptible of the impressions of sympathy, forgot the bravery of the hero, and seemed wholly made up of love and pity; it was a rare composition of hardiness and tenderness, courage and compassion, in the same breast. Observe, he mourned as for a brother or mother, which intimates that it is our duty, and well becomes us, to lay to heart the sickness, and sorrow, and death of our near relations. Those that do not are justly stigmatized as without natural affection.
- 2.) He prayed for them. He discovered not only the tender affection of a man, but the pious affection of a saint. He was concerned for their precious souls, and, since he helped them with his prayers to God for mercy and grace; and the prayers of one who had so great an interest in heaven were of more value than perhaps they knew or considered. With his prayers he joined humiliation and self-affliction, both in his diet (he fasted, at least from pleasant bread) and in his dress; he clothed himself with sackcloth, thus expressing his grief, not only for their affliction, but for their sin; for this was the guise and practice of a penitent. We ought to mourn for the sins of those that do not mourn for them themselves. His fasting also put an edge upon his praying, and was an expression of the fervor of it; he was so intent in his devotions that he had no appetite to meat, nor would allow himself time for eating:

"My prayer returned into my own bosom; I had the comfort of having done my duty, and of having approved myself a loving neighbour, though I could not thereby win upon them nor make them my friends." We shall not lose by the good offices we have done to any, how ungrateful whosoever they are; for our rejoicing will be this, the testimony of our conscience.

Proverbs 25:21-22: (NASB) ²¹*If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;* ²²*For you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.*

Luke 6:27-36: (NASB) ²⁷*But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,* ²⁸*bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.* ²⁹*Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either.* ³⁰*Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.* ³¹*Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.* ³²*If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.* ³³*If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.* ³⁴*If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount.* ³⁵*But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.* ³⁶*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

Acts 7:54-60: (NASB) ⁵⁴*Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.* ⁵⁵*But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;* ⁵⁶*and he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.* ⁵⁷*But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse.* ⁵⁸*When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.* ⁵⁹*They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit* ⁶⁰*Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not hold this sin against them! Having said this, he fell asleep.*

Romans 12:14-21: (NASB) ¹⁴*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.* ¹⁵*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.* ¹⁶*Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.* ¹⁷*Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.* ¹⁸*If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.* ¹⁹*Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay says the Lord.* ²⁰*but if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.* ²¹*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

1 Corinthians 13:4-7: (NASB) ⁴*Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,* ⁵*does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,* ⁶*does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;* ⁷*bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

1 Peter 2:21-24: (NASB) ²¹*For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps,* ²²*who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth.* ²³*and while being reviled, he did not revile in return; while suffering, he uttered no threats, but kept entrusting himself to Him who judges righteously;* ²⁴*and he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by his wounds you were healed.*



(Source: Psychology Today: *8 Strategies for Dealing with the Toxic People in Your Life*, by Peg Streep)

1. Recognize the traits that make you easy prey.

Assessing what you bring to the party doesn't mean taking responsibility or the blame for someone's mistreatment of you - keep this difference in mind. Is it your need to please or your fear of rocking the boat that keeps you tongue-tied when your friend makes you the victim of her bad mood? Use cool processing to think about the interactions you've had with the person that make you unhappy - focusing on why you felt as you did, not what you felt - and see if you can discern a pattern. Insecurely attached daughters often confuse someone's need to control and grandstand with strength and perseverance, and can easily find themselves ensnared by someone toxic. If that's the case, you need to pay attention.

2. Explore your reactivity.

Again, without taking the blame for the dynamic, you should look at both the degree to which you overreact and under-react in the relationship; either can unwittingly intensify the dynamic and keep it going. A controlling or bullying person will regard your under-reaction as permission to keep treating you in precisely the same way. People with an anxious/preoccupied attachment style tend to be hyper-vigilant about cues that the relationship is going south and often become angry and vituperative when threatened; this kind of overreaction is likely to make a narcissist feel powerful and inspire him or her to keep playing games.

Instead, work on managing your emotions and set some goals for yourself in terms of handling the relationship differently. Use "If/Then" thinking to embolden your implementation of your plans. Prepare by focusing on what you will do if an exchange happens, using the "If X, then Y" formula. For example, "If my friend makes a nasty remark, then I'm going to say, 'Why would you say something so hurtful?'" or "If my mother denies what she said to me, then I will simply say, 'You can't browbeat me into believing that it didn't happen.'" This isn't easy and it takes practice but standing up for your perceptions is important.

3. Trust your gut.

One reason insecurely attached people stay in hurtful relationships is a lack of trust in themselves or their judgment. If your default position is to always rationalize toxic behavior ("He really didn't mean what he said; it was just the heat of the moment") or to give the person the benefit of the doubt ("She didn't realize how hurtful her gesture was; once it's explained to her, I'm sure she'll come around"), this is the moment to stop and realize why you're doing the excusing. If you find yourself falling back into the pattern of making excuses or rationalizing toxic behavior, stop.

4. Beware of the sunk cost fallacy.

What's keeping you in this relationship anyway? The thought of what you've put into it? Your fear of loss and being alone? As the work of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky shows, humans are famously loss-averse, and prefer to hold onto what they have in the short term - even if giving up a little will get them more in the long run. Additionally, they prefer the known to the unknown, even if the former makes them unhappy. All of that yields the most pernicious unconscious pattern, called the sunk cost fallacy, which is often responsible for keeping us in places we ought not to be, including toxic relationships. This is the habit of mind that focuses on what you have invested in something—it could be emotion, time, effort, or even money—and keeps you in place so as not to lose that investment. Of course, whatever the "investment" is, you can't retrieve it under any circumstances - whether it's the years you put into a job or a relationship, or the money you put into your failing car or venture - so there's no real logic to the thinking. This fallacy has been used to justify wars, cars that have long since outlived their usefulness, and all manner of lousy relationships and marriages.

If you catch yourself thinking about what you have sunk into the relationship with a toxic person, instead start thinking about where you might find yourself if you let go. That word "fallacy" says it all.



5. Recognize the power of intermittent reinforcement.

You may consider yourself more of a “glass-half-empty” kind of person than the “glass-half-full” type, but research shows that, generally, humans are overly optimistic. We tend to see a close loss more as a “near win.” This is what keeps people at slot machines: When three of the same symbol line up, they take it as a sign that the fourth will show up shortly. There's an evolutionary reason behind this: When the challenges of life were largely physical—think hunter with bow and arrow - staying encouraged enough to keep going and turn the near win into a real one was a good thing. Additionally, we're more motivated to hang in, paradoxically enough, when we get what we want some of the time.

That's what B.F. Skinner showed with three very hungry rats, each in its own cage, with a lever that delivered food when pressed. In the first cage, the lever always delivered food and, with that understanding, the rat went about its business. In the second cage, the lever never delivered food; that rat absorbed the lesson and lost interest. But in the third cage, the lever worked randomly, and the rat was fixated and totally hooked. He pushed at the lever constantly. That's intermittent reinforcement.

Alas, this works in human relationships, too: When a toxic person actually does something nice, your heart leaps, your optimism ramps up, and you think, “We are turning a corner!” that locks you in for that much longer, just like that rat. “Now and again” does not a pattern make, and you need to keep that in mind.

6. Guard those boundaries or plan an exit strategy.

If the toxic person is someone you can't avoid coming into contact with - a co-worker, a neighbor, your mother-in-law, or someone in your social circle - set boundaries for behavior and the kind of contact you're going to have. Insecurely attached people often have trouble recognizing what a healthy boundary looks like and don't always know how to negotiate them. You don't need to be rude, abrasive, or accusatory; in fact, it's important that you aren't, but that you are firm and decisive. If it's a work situation, go through the appropriate channels and put it in writing. To a co-worker, you might say, “I'm okay with criticism, but I'd prefer if you not make it personal. My being overweight has nothing to do with my performance.” Or to the mother-in-law who makes jokes at your expense, “I'm sorry, but that's not funny. I may not be the most organized housekeeper, but my family seems to be thriving nonetheless.” For the toxic others you can ultimately give the boot, plan an exit strategy.

7. Anticipate push-back or retaliation.

It's likely that the toxic person in your life has his or her own “investment” in the connection—he likes controlling you, or she likes the lift her power over you gives her - so once you start setting boundaries and confronting the individual, don't expect him to go gently into the night. The chances are good that he or she will redouble efforts to keep the dynamic going by manipulating, gas-lighting, or spreading rumors about you, to gain the upper hand. This is especially true if you move to end a marriage to a narcissist who will want to retain the sense of having won and triumphed at all costs.

8. Don't normalize abusive behavior.

This is especially important if you've been in a toxic relationship for a long time or you grew up around people who used words as weapons. They may have demeaned, marginalized, or dismissed you or other family members and then rationalized their behavior by saying, “They're only words”; denying that they were ever said (a form of gas-lighting); or asserting that the real problem was your sensitivity. Refusing to answer you or ignoring you is also abusive behavior of the silent variety. It's clear to most everyone that lying is toxic but so is telling partial truths or a carefully edited version of events and then, once challenged, blaming you for not asking the right questions. (This was a ploy of a toxic person I knew who also happened to be a lawyer.) The bottom line is that emotional and verbal abuse are never okay.

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