

TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS

How to Regain Lost Power
In Your Relationship

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PREFACE OF AUTHOR

Over a decade now, I have seen and worked on hundreds of cases as a family law attorney (divorce, adoption, paternity, etc.). Through personal experiences and my cases, I began to notice specific personality patterns in certain types of relationships. Sometimes the personality pattern was manifest in the client, and other times in their spouse.

Over time, I started to see that my clients' stories were not isolated incidents. Similar stories were being repeated time and time again from multiple clients. I became so familiar with the behaviors they were experiencing in their relationships that their toxic spouse became "PREDICTABLE" to me, even though seemingly UNpredictable to them. Often to their complete surprise, I could almost relay *their* story to them, or at least fill in the details and gaps as they spoke. Oddly, their relationship situations had repeated similarities. Eventually, I could ask questions, almost knowing their reply before they answered. It was at this point, I realized I had discovered valuable information that could help others understand their relationships and ultimately remove pain from their lives.

I originally wrote this book for my clients to read and study from to understand the role they play in their current relationships and to help them avoid painful future relationships. After reading this information, the reactions have been varied. Most respond as though their eyes have been opened for the first time. Others react with anger towards the toxic person in their life. Whatever the reaction, the

result is certain. They start to see their relationship, or their partner, in a whole new way. This valuable information reduces their anxiety levels, and they begin to feel more in control of their lives.

Some clients have opted to stay in their existing Toxic Relationship while working to remove the power imbalance to make the relationship toxic free. Others have moved on to new relationships that don't require as much work. In either instance, they are both stronger and more empowered.

I hope this book will give you greater direction in your life too. I want your eyes to be completely opened to the dynamics in your present and past relationships. I'm confident that your personal life will be better and more fulfilled because of this valuable insight into the world of Toxic Relationships.

CHAPTER I

Part A

RELATIONSHIPS THAT FRUSTRATE, HURT AND CONFUSE

No one enters into a relationship thinking or hoping that it will be painful or destructive. We each want to feel better about ourselves from our interaction with others, especially when we are attached or attracted to them. Sometimes, usually when we least expect it, we find ourselves caught in the quagmire of an unhealthy relationship. Oftentimes, we don't know how we got there, and we certainly don't know what to do to fix it.

During difficult times in our relationships, we question our feelings and even doubt our senses as well as our judgment. Often, an objective opinion from a friend or counselor can help us see our relationship more realistically. There are certain specific signs to look for in relationships that hurt and confuse. Please read and answer these next few questions and consider hurtful or trouble-filled relationships in your life as you read.

Do you have a relationship with someone who makes you feel less than you are? and less than you want to be? Do you act differently around them because of their negative comments, or

because they constantly de-value you? Are you on edge because of their criticism and anger? Do you feel powerless at times because of their extreme mood swings and unending demands?

Do you feel their attempts to control you? Do you feel like you can- “Never get it right”? No matter how much you give in or give up- are they impossible to please? Do they subtly sabotage your good feelings and good moods? Have you ever been physically harmed or threatened by this person? Do they abruptly interrupt you when you are enjoying an event, a joke, and a good laugh with someone else? Are their demands uncompromising and pushy? Do they ever expect you to drop what you’re doing and respond to them immediately- (particularly when you are having FUN- instead of waiting for a better time)?

Do you find yourself constantly trying to please this person? When unsuccessful, do you avoid this person as often as possible? When you do interact, do you come away feeling violated and diminished? Does interaction with this person ruin your holidays or your good holiday spirit? Do family get-togethers or reunions ever leave you feeling stressed because of encounters with this person?

Do you find yourself on a roller-coaster ride of emotions when around this person?- never quite knowing if their mood will be UP or DOWN. Do you get blamed for anything and everything that goes wrong?

- Are you ready to see your relationship for what it is?
- Are you ready to see this personality type for who they are?

- Finally, are you ready to change this relationship, stop the pain, and regain the power you have lost?

**IF YOU ANSWERED “YES” TO ANY OF THESE
QUESTIONS,
YOU MAY BE CAUGHT IN A TOXIC RELATIONSHIP,
AND THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN FOR YOU!**

The relationship problems described above are what I refer to as “TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS”. They drain LIFE from you. They suck your enjoyment in life- almost as though you are actually being poisoned. After you have been around a negative person like this it takes time to regain your self-confidence and recover the energy they suck from you. Prolonged Toxic Relationships can poison your system and bring illness and dis”ease”; which can ultimately result in disease to your body.

Toxic Relationships remove the most important aspects of life from you. They rob you of joy, excitement, love, and passion. A prolonged Toxic Relationship can diminish your desire or zest for living.

Like the “Dementors” described in *Harry Potter, The Prisoner from Azkabar*, toxic people are- “Life-Sucking”. They strip your individuality until you begin to doubt yourself and your abilities. Their intimidation tactics are used for one purpose only- CONTROL! They will attempt to control you through their actions and reactions, and conversely, they will attempt to control you through their lack of

actions (especially at times when a reaction is expected). Think about this, and I'll describe it in more detail later in this book.

You are certainly not alone. Other people just like you are experiencing the same feelings and emotions you live with. There is a pattern to the personality type that keeps you stuck and in pain. This book will help you understand the enigmatic personality or “mystery person” in your life. **When you see them for what they are, that discovery will empower you!**

Further, this book will show you how to STOP the pain, and get to healthy ground in this relationship. If you determine this relationship is worth saving, this book will teach you techniques and tools to regain and re-assemble your “SELF” so that you will have greater equality in your relationship. The principles you are about to learn will empower you with knowledge, -and knowledge is the first step to changing a painful relationship into one where you feel secure, accepted, and valued.

If you have already ended a previous Toxic Relationship, it is essential that you know and can spot this personality type before you enter into another similar relationship. Each of us has an attachment mode that we follow. Your attachment mode defines the kind of person toward whom you gravitate. Often, we have to change our attachment mode in order to change the future outcome of our relationships.

Your attachment mode may be programmed to find persons who are similar to those with whom you had UNFINISHED BUSINESS during your childhood. For example, if you never felt loved or accepted by your father you may seek out an emotionally

distant man and then spend your time trying to gain an emotional connection with him in an attempt to resolve the emotional distance between you and your father. You may also try to get your busy work-a-holic husband to spend more time with you because your father never had time for you.

In general, the popular belief is that each of us marries one of our parents. Which one did you marry?... and why? One interesting case came early in my practice, which clearly reflects this principle:

Becky was a woman in her thirties with four kids who was finally leaving her alcoholic husband. She had no money for legal fees so her father had come with her to pay the retainer and to check me out. We started the interview and after about 10 minutes her father said, "Can I smoke in here?" I replied, "No, we can't have smoke in here because the receptionist is allergic to it". He then asked, "Can I drink in here?" I had never been around an alcoholic, and clearly thought he was just joking. So I said jokingly, "Sure, tie one on!" I never believed I would see what came next. Sure enough, he pulled out a flask from inside his jacket pocket and started to drink. I was floored. As I continued to interview this young woman about her struggles with her **alcoholic husband** the interaction between her and her father became more and more hostile. I felt

uncomfortable and stopped the interview and said, “Well, I think I have enough information for now, if I need anything further I’ll give you a call”. They paid their money and left.

The next morning I called Becky and said, “Becky, I’m sorry I cut the meeting short last night, but your father was becoming so hostile toward you that I couldn’t let it continue.”

She said, “Oh, I know! But that’s nothing- I had to hear about how I didn’t answer your questions right and I didn’t speak up, etc..until about 11:00 p.m.!”

I replied, “From what I have seen so far and the things you have told me I can see a parallel here.

She said, “**I know, I’ve married my Father!**”

Why do we re-play and re-construct over and over the frustrating dramas of our life and hope that the ending will somehow change?

Sadly, it won’t end any better the second or third time through than it did in our childhood. An unfulfilled past relationship is often un-resolvable. This inability to gain closure and to fix the problem will only frustrate you and your relationship(s).

There will be more on this subject in the chapter on modes of attachment under the chapter entitled, “How did this happen to me?”

Toxic Relationships isolate the world of the non-toxic spouse to the point that they actually begin to believe they are the only one who has such a bad relationship. They start to think they have done something to trigger their partner’s meanness. In time, they question their judgment for choosing such a partner. Their self-esteem is deeply affected by the Toxic Relationship.

We all know that it is extremely dangerous to climb into a pen with a tiger. We also know not to aggravate a hungry tiger or he may attack. Since we know this, we alter and change our behavior while around tigers to make sure that we don’t do anything to set them off. Our knowledge about tigers helps us have positive interactions with them.

Similarly, you need to think of a toxic personality as a tiger. One-on-one contact, *without protection*, can be dangerous to our self-esteem and identity and should be avoided. Toxic personalities cannot be trusted with our most *tender side*, our opinions, or our innermost beliefs. They will hungrily devour them and suck our blood dry. I will explain how in later chapters.

CASE STUDIES:

Throughout this book, I will relate specific cases of clients that have lived in and through Toxic Relationships. Most of these cases were at the point that one or both spouses could not take the constant struggle any longer and came to me for a divorce or a legal separation. The names in these cases have been changed to protect

their privacy but their cases and experiences are true...and truth is always more amazing than fiction.

My goal with my clients, and also for you, is to help remove some of the mystery from these types of personalities and relationships, and to empower the non-toxic partner, You!- with valuable information. Increased knowledge will put you back in the driver's seat and prevent an ongoing painful relationship, and years wasted repeating the same pattern in your future relationships.

TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS ARE COMMON:

You are not alone. In my practice I see Toxic Relationships almost on a daily basis (in about 70%+ of all divorce cases). Additionally, I have seen this pattern in certain friends' relationships, and in my own past dating experiences.

Usually, each non-toxic person thinks that *their* partner's behavior is *exclusive to them!* Meaning, they do not know other people are going through the same power imbalances. Many believe they somehow *caused* their partners' demeaning behavior towards them, or at least contributed to it. They are relieved to find they are not alone.

The faces and names in each case described hereafter are different, but the pattern is the same. The mode of operation of these toxic partners continues to re-surface over and over again.

*** Important Note:**

There is a PATTERN in Toxic Relationships, but the people themselves come with many different faces.

A girlfriend of mine used to say,

“Men are all alike,- they just have different faces!”

Men would probably say the same thing about women. Although we laugh about it, there is truth to certain specific male and female traits within relationships. However, *toxicity is not a male or a female trait*. Toxicity is a learned behavior and is not related to gender.

Toxic personalities are NOT gender specific.

*They can be either women or men.

Both genders can act in a toxic role in their relationships.

The majority of Toxic Relationships I have experienced in my practice have been male-dominated so I will use the pronouns “He”, “Him”, and “His” for purposes of this book. Please insert gender specifics of “her”, “she” “herself” etc. if your experience has been with a female dominated Toxic Relationship.

Female Toxic Relationships can happen with a mother-in-law, sister-in-law, grandmother, sister, aunt, female boss, teacher, friend, mother, spouse, or any other female in your life. Male Toxic Relationships happen with a father-in-law, brother-in law, grandfather, brother, uncle, male boss, teacher, friend, father, spouse, or any other male in your life. However, in this book I will predominantly refer to Toxic Relationships within intimate familial relationships.

*** Important Note:**

Over time, Toxic Relationships cause anger fear, and resentment in the non-toxic spouse.

**If not addressed, the non-toxic spouse will ultimately become something she is not..... her partner.*

WHERE DO TOXIC PARTNERS CROSS THE LINE?

Men are naturally driven to dominate and protect their spouses. It is a wonderful attribute in the male nature to protect and provide for their families and their spouse. These are noble and great qualities, but are clearly NOT what we're discussing here.

The line is crossed in a relationship when one party degrades, de-values and minimizes the other through guilt, blame, and shame. Toxic people cross the line when they do not allow their spouse to have enjoyment away from them or the kids *without guilt and shame*. They cross the line when they do not support their spouse's personal fulfillment in hobbies or interests outside of their relationship, such as outings with friends, trips, golfing, or movies.

They cross the line when their spouses are not allowed to have different opinions from theirs without confrontation or an argument over it. They cross the line when they control their partners through criticism, screaming, temper tantrums, physical abuse, or other means of dominance and control.

The same is true for toxic women as for toxic men. When *control* is the issue in the relationship (and it is), there arises a diminishment of power for the weaker, more docile, amiable, and less-assertive spouse.

The resulting *diminishment of power*, coupled with *ridicule and shame*, is what causes the non-toxic spouse to experience pain, frustration, anger, resentment, confusion, depression and eventual loss of self-esteem.

As I've described these symptoms you may be thinking, "I have felt that way", or "I wonder if that's why I'm unhappy in this relationship". Take a moment to find out if the relationship you are involved in is causing you pain and trouble. Take one of the ***Toxic Relationship Tests*** of this book. Answer the questions as honestly as you can. (Do not look at the answer key or scoring analysis in advance or it may influence your first response). Simply, answer first and score later.

Test each relationship that *has caused*, or *is* causing, you pain and frustration. Score each relationship separately. For sexual/romantic relationships take Test #1. For non-sexual relationships use Test #2.

*** Important Note:**

***Beware! After you read this book you may never see your spouse/partner's behavior the same again. Increased awareness is empowering!**

Now, please start your test.

**DO NOT READ FURTHER UNTIL YOU HAVE
COMPLETED YOUR TESTING.**