

Signs You're with a Toxic Person

Mara B. Edmunds, MMFT

The toxic person might:

- Consistently take more from you than they put into the relationship.
- Play the chronic “victim” and expect you to save them/solve their problems.
- Neglect your needs while highlighting their own.
- Expect you to be there for them while they aren't there for you.
- Expect contextually inappropriate things from you.
- Have a singular focus or “tunnel vision.”
- Seek to control you emotionally, mentally, monetarily, physically, sexually, or spiritually.
- Manipulate you in order to change your thoughts and behaviors.
- Punish you, shame you, or become aggressive if you confront them.
- Be difficult to have a conversation with: dominate, minimize, become defensive, insert sarcasm, misplace humor, close up, or refuse to listen to another perspective.
- Prioritize their agenda over your relationship.
- Ignore people or cut them off after they're “done” with them.
- Have an agenda that others are not allowed to influence.
- Hide things from you, twist the truth, or downright lie.
- Exude a negative and draining energy toward you while being a “hero” to others.
- Not take “No!” “Wait!” or “Stop!” as valid responses.
- Not hear you, validate you, or attempt to be empathetic.

Things you might notice in yourself:

- They send you into a psychological survival mode.
- You are stuck because of them and can't progress toward your personal goals.
- They make you feel you have to prove or justify yourself.
- You may feel like a burden, small, undeserving, or insignificant around them.
- They bring out a side of you that doesn't feel real or true to yourself.
- They are rarely if ever able to make you laugh/smile.
- You feel obligated to save face for them or cover their tracks.
- You dread being with them and can't relax or be yourself in their presence.
- You find yourself distancing your associations with them.
- They may cause physical reactions in you: increased pulse/respiration rate, headache, stomachache, muscle tension, or insomnia.
- You tend to feel anxious when talking with them or even just near them.
- You feel others may unjustly suffer if you don't pick up the toxic person's slack.
- You are exhausted after being around them.

Signs You're with an Amazing Person

The amazing person might:

- Consistently match or sometimes exceed the effort you put into the relationship.
- Calmly respect your opinion even when it is completely different from theirs.
- Smile at you/greet you when you enter the room. Miss you when you're gone.
- Be curious about you and sincerely want to know what is important to you.
- Keep regularly updated with you in a way that allows for healthy attachment and mutual growth.
- Honor your dreams as if they were their own.
- Regularly demonstrate the higher priority you take over their phone.
- Make you feel safe, accepted, empowered, and more like yourself.
- Protect and defend you and comfort you when you are upset.
- Seek first to understand and validate your viewpoint, not rush to correcting your accuracy. Never talk behind your back.
- Be willing to have difficult conversations when needed with a specific and mutually benefitting goal in mind.
- Allow space for mistakes and repairs. Know how to self-soothe and doesn't rely on you for everything.
- Clearly and patiently communicate what they are thinking, feeling, needing, and wanting from you.
- Be emotionally present with you no matter what you're feeling.
- Model the positive attributes they would like from you but never demand.
- Have solid boundaries and not allow you to take advantage of them.
- Make you laugh and smile regularly.
- Hold you, hug you, or show you some form of meaningful affection.

Things you might notice in yourself:

- You feel more alive and relaxed around them. You take better care of yourself.
- You are challenged to think in new and different ways outside of your norms.
- You genuinely desire to become a better person for them.
- You enjoy spending time with them, supporting them, and encouraging them.
- You feel free to pursue your dreams and are always welcome to discuss the journey with them without criticism.
- You feel safe to laugh, cry, or even be sad or angry around them because there is a solid foundation of respect between you.
- You are making progress in your life because of their influence.
- You can't imagine your life without them in it.

Be an amazing person!