



Dealing with a ‘toxic’ relationship

By **Dr John Demartini**, human behaviourist, author, teacher and business consultant

BEFORE we discuss exiting a relationship, let’s look at what is happening within the relationship in question. The term “toxic relationship” is a label projection.

One of the parties in the relationship is unable to see how the behaviour of their partner or friend is serving them.

We tend to label other people because we project our own values onto them and unwisely expect them to live according to our values. We don’t recognise and respect their values and that they will live according to their own set of values and not ours.

A relationship can become corrosive and caustic when we consistently challenge our partners and when we don’t know how to communicate what we value in terms of their values.

If we leave this relationship before learning how to communicate in their values, we are likely to recreate the pattern with someone else. It would be prudent to attempt to fire up the relationship before firing it out.

First, ask yourself which specific traits, actions or inactions displayed by your partner you dislike or hate the most. Be specific and objective about what they’re doing and beware of your own confirmation bias. Compose a list of all these things.

Then, look at the list one item at a time and ask yourself where you display

or demonstrate the same behaviours in some same or similar form. Who experiences and sees these behaviours when you display them?

It is easy to resent others for their behaviours, but in truth they are just reminding us of the parts of our own lives that we dislike or judge and maybe too proud to own. We become blind to our own actions and would be wise to humble ourselves and look at our situation clearly before we respond.

Now, think about how these behaviours are serving you. How do you benefit from them? What are you learning? How

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are they strengthening you? Are they making you more independent, giving you drive, expanding your social circle or making you closer to your family? Are they helping you develop your career in some way?

Lastly, imagine if your partner were to act in the opposite way, in the way you wish they would, what would the drawbacks be? You might wish that they could provide more and be more complimentary and then all would be “good”. However, if they did this, it may stop your

growth and you may become dependent on them. You may end up stuck at home while they work and they may then control your life. We don’t often think of the consequences of the fantasy we hold on to.

When we are angry with people, we generally display a subjective bias in how we perceive them. We accentuate the negative and minimise the positive. The truth is somewhere in the middle. We are all kind and cruel, generous and stingy, etc. Your partner has balance, as do you. If you’re projecting a label onto them and calling them toxic, they will be under a constant sympathetic response and act in a retaliatory manner.

People want to be loved and appreciated for who they are and what they are is a reflection of their highest values. If you don’t know what your partner’s highest values are or don’t respect them enough to determine them, you will have unrealistic expectations as to how they will live their lives. They can only live according to their highest values. If you communicate with them according to their highest values when you want them to do something for you or behave in a certain way, then there is a higher probability that they will do it. When you help them get what they want, you’ll get what you want.

If you haven’t considered or mastered the action steps above, I advise that you try them. You might discover that the relationship is not as toxic as you first thought.