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TOXIC FRIENDSHIP: WHEN IT'S TIME TO LET GO

Toxic Friendship

WHEN IT'S TIME TO LET GO

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Friendship is a sacred covenant because it imparts purpose, meaning, and a sense of belonging to our lives that no other relationship can match. It can be translated as a friend who provides us with support, friendship, and the opportunity to share our lives with someone who genuinely cares. Not all friendships are healthy or positive. Unhealthy friendships, commonly referred to as toxic friendships, can contribute to an increased frequency of internal conflicts (Suroya & Dewi, 2022) and can harm healthy relationships. Such friendships have a high propensity to impair a person's productivity, cause mental disruptions, and even provoke violent emotional outbursts. Therefore, it is important for an individual to recognise the signs of toxic friendships in order to protect themselves from their potentially negative influence and help to investigate the impact of toxic relationships on mental health (Rahimah et al., 2022).

What is a toxic friendship?

According to Rahimah et al., (2022), toxic friendships can erode an individual's self-respect, self-confidence, and personality, posing a threat to the individual involved. In a toxic relationship, one person has more power and control over the other, leaving the other feeling powerless and submissive. In addition, toxic friendships include relationships in which one party consistently makes the other uncomfortable, makes them feel bad about themselves, demeans them, or takes advantage of them (Lahad & van Hooff, 2022). Typically, this friendship is unidirectional, with one party giving and the other party receiving. A friend who is toxic is quick to control, manipulate, and emotionally deplete others, leaving them emotionally drained and devastated. So, let's examine some indicators that your friendship may be toxic:

You consistently feel exhausted after spending time with them.

They are excessively critical of you and demeaning.

They demand your attention constantly and disregard your boundaries.

They use guilt or manipulation to achieve their objectives.

They speak negatively about you behind your back or to others.

They are perpetually pessimistic and never have anything positive to say.

They make you feel inferior and insecure.

They are never pleased with your achievements and frequently attempt to bring you down.

The reality is that dealing with toxic friendships is extremely challenging, especially for long-time friends. Nonetheless, it is crucial to recognise that toxic friendships are unhealthy and can negatively affect your mental health and well-being (Rahimah et al., 2022), heightened levels of internal conflict, including anxiety, self-doubt, and emotional distress. You can deal with toxic friendships by taking the following steps:

Set boundaries: You must communicate with your friend about his unacceptable behaviour and be firm about it.

Communicate: Discuss with your friends how their behaviour affects you and be forthright about your feelings.

Take a break: Give yourself time to heal (ease off) and re-evaluate the relationship by distancing yourself and taking a break from the friendship.

Ask for help: Find a trustworthy individual with whom you can discuss the situation and receive support and advice. However, exercise caution when choosing an audience member because it is not impossible for this individual to stab you in the back. In the meantime, a study (Suroya & Dewi, 2022) concluded that toxic friendship communication decreases after receiving group counselling services with a reality-based approach.

End the friendship: If the toxic behaviour persists and has negative mental or physical effects on you, please end the friendship.

To conclude, toxic friendships can be just as damaging as toxic loving relationships, and it is important to recognise the signs of a toxic friendship in order to avoid their negative influence. If you find yourself in a toxic friendship, it is essential to establish boundaries, communicate, seek support, and, if necessary, end the friendship. You deserve to have healthy, positive, and supportive relationships in your life (Lahad & van Hooff, 2022). Toxic friendships are a threat to one's happiness.

References:

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