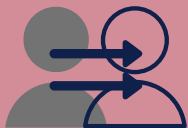


WEEK 3

TOOLS TO THRIVE THROUGH CONNECTING

AN EMPLOYEE WELLBEING INITIATIVE: FOR ALL UFS EMPLOYEES

TRAITS OF TOXIC PEOPLE



- **Manipulation.** Toxic people are often very good at manipulation. They may seem to be genuinely interested in your company and getting to know you at first, but will eventually use the knowledge they gain about you to try and get you to do what they want. They will often twist your words or make you feel guilty to get their way.
- **They make you feel bad about yourself.** Insults are the most direct way that toxic people can make you feel bad, but most of the time the ways they affect your self-esteem are more subtle. When you are feeling happy or proud of yourself, they will find ways to “rain on your parade” or downplay your achievements. They might also act like they are smarter than you to make you feel dumb or insignificant.
- **Being judgemental.** Everyone can be judgemental from time to time, but a toxic person is judgemental almost all of the time. They see things in black and white and criticise anything that they don't agree with or approve of, instead of considering the circumstances or the feelings of other people.
- **Negativity.** Some people just can't seem to see the good in life. They will find something bad about everything and aren't able to find joy in anything. Being around someone like this can make it hard for you to enjoy yourself and be positive. Sometimes it can be easy to confuse the symptoms of depression for negativity, so it is worth having a conversation with someone to determine if they need help getting through depression or if they are truly being toxic.
- **Passive aggression.** These behaviours are a way that people express their discontent without having a conversation about their problems. This type of hostility is less obvious than anger and can be shown in a number of different ways. Some forms of passive aggression include snide comments, sabotaging the efforts of other people, and purposefully doing something or not doing something to make things inconvenient for someone or get them upset.
- **Self-centered.** Toxic people care mostly about themselves. They don't think about how their actions affect others and believe they are better than everyone else. Someone who is self-centered is focused on getting what they want and is unlikely to compromise or consider another person's point of view.
- **Difficulty with anger management.** Someone who has trouble managing their anger will make you feel like you are walking on eggshells every time you are around them. The littlest thing can trigger them into a fit of rage, and often nasty, hurtful things are said while they are in this mental state. There may be apologies the day after, but often they are insincere and the toxic person will repeat their angry, hurtful behaviours soon after.
- **Controlling.** One of the most dangerous traits of a toxic person is controlling behaviour. They may try to restrict you from contacting your friends or family, or limit resources like transportation or access to money to restrict your ability to interact with the world around you. If you are in a situation where someone is trying to restrict your movements or communication, this is domestic abuse and requires immediate action.

WEEK 3

TOOLS TO THRIVE THROUGH CONNECTING

TIPS FOR CONNECTING



- **Connect with others at places you already go to.** There are places that you go to over and over again - these are great places to strike up conversations and start to make friends. At work you might ask a co-worker to join you for lunch or to grab a cup of coffee. If you have kids involved in extracurricular activities, you probably see the same other parents attending their practices or dropping them off each time. If you go to the gym at the same time each day, you may notice others who are on the same workout schedule.
- **Use shared experience as a topic of conversation.** Use your current situation as a topic to talk about. Maybe you're stuck waiting in a long line, or you noticed someone is wearing a shirt from a place that you've been. Hometown sports, local news and events, or even the weather can also get a conversation going.
- **Give compliments.** If you're struggling to figure out what to say to someone to strike up a conversation, try starting with a compliment. You can comment on a person's outfit, tattoo, or a piece of jewellery that you like and maybe ask them where they got it. Use their response to continue the conversation, for example if they tell you they got it at a certain store, ask where that is.
- **Make time to be social.** Going to work and taking care of life's other daily responsibilities is time consuming and many of us feel exhausted by the end of the day. While it's tempting to just sit on the sofa and zone out in front of the TV, that time can be spent in a more meaningful way. Set aside at least half an hour each day to connect with other people outside of work.
- **Not all connections have to be done in person.** While spending time with someone face-to-face helps to create the strongest relationships, phone calls, text messaging, emails, and video chats can maintain friendships when distance or time constraints get in the way of hanging out.
- **Accept invitations.** If someone asks you to go somewhere or do something with them, accept their invitation. When you turn people down over and over, they may stop inviting you. It may not be your favourite place or activity, but you can use the time to build your friendship and suggest things you like better for the next time you get together with that person.
- **Pay attention to what other people are interested in.** For instance, you may notice a family portrait or a pet's picture on a coworker's desk. Ask them how old their children are, or what their pet's name is - and show genuine interest in their answers. Ask follow up questions and if appropriate, share something relevant about yourself, like how many children you have or the name of your pet.
- **Organise activities.** If there is something that you are interested in doing, ask someone else (or a group of other people) to join you. It can be hard to make the first move, but it may end up that someone else wanted to do the same thing all along and was waiting to find out who else was interested. Don't be discouraged if schedules don't cooperate sometimes. Keep making invitations!

DETOXING YOUR LIFE

THIS WORKSHEET WILL HELP YOU THINK THROUGH WAYS TO CREATE HEALTHY BOUNDARIES SO YOU CAN GET RID OF TOXIC INFLUENCES IN YOUR LIFE.

WHAT IS THE THING THAT YOU NEED TO STOP OR GET OUT OF YOUR LIFE?

THIS CAN BE A PERSON, BEHAVIOR OR SITUATION. EXAMPLE: I WANT HEALTHIER RELATIONSHIPS.

DESIRABLE OR HEALTHY

EXAMPLE: I WANT SOMEONE WHO ENCOURAGES ME, SOMEONE WHO IS PATIENT.

UNCLEAR

EXAMPLES: HAVING FIGHTS WHERE WE YELL, TALKING OVER EACH OTHER.

TOXIC OR UNACCEPTABLE

EXAMPLES: HITTING EACH OTHER, CUSSING AT EACH OTHER, NAME CALLING.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO GIVE YOURSELF A PEP TALK?

EXAMPLES: I DESERVE TO HAVE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS. I CHOOSE ME.

WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO THE TOXIC INFLUENCE TO SET BOUNDARIES?

EXAMPLES: IT IS NOT OK FOR US TO DO THIS. I WANT US TO GET BETTER AND THESE ARE WHAT IS OK FOR YOU TO DO AND WHAT IS ABSOLUTELY NOT OK FOR YOU TO DO.

WHAT CAN YOU DO AND SAY TO REINFORCE YOUR BOUNDARIES OR CREATE HEALTHY DISTANCE?

EXAMPLES: IF YOU DO (THIS), I'M GOING TO LEAVE. IF YOU DO (THIS) I'M GOING TO WALK OUT AND TAKE A BREAK.



While 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health.

Remember this weeks challenge:

Send a photo of you connecting with your friends/family to niemancl@ufs.ac.za

The most creative photo stands a chance to win an amazing prize!

