

# Time to detox

Invest in relationships that allow you to be your best self

Let's Talk

Yeah, about time!

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Have you ever been in a relationship which has compelled you to ask, “Why?” – *Why am I stuck being friends with her? Why am I related to him? Why do I have to put up with this?*

We all go through periods where we question our sanity and wonder why we continue to associate with some of the people in our life. Usually, these periods are fleeting and occasional. However, if it is a constant fixture in your life, then perhaps it is time to evaluate if you are in a toxic relationship, and consequently, what you want to do about it.

## Toxic conversations

Toxicity isn't always in-your-face. It could take the form of several little drops of negative behaviours that eventually form your ocean of unhappiness. Perhaps, conversations with that one friend of yours always revolves around the highs and lows of his or her life, never yours; maybe he or she offloads emotional baggage on you and it is your job to be the porter, pick those bags up and scurry after him while he runs to catch his train to Feeling *Betterpuram*. However, when it is his turn to be there for you during difficult times, he is nowhere to be seen.

Here is another scenario: Maybe you have a partner who is constantly putting you down with subtle insults, forcing you to start questioning your self-worth. You might be suffering through it in silence because everything else about this person is wonderful, and after all, they are just words, right?

When we're in a toxic relationship, it isn't always easy to acknowledge it in the first place. We may have known the person for a long time, and would have seen their good side as well. We might rationalise or make excuses for their behaviour towards us. So, the first thing to do is apply a lens of objectivity while reflecting on your relationship – do you feel happy when you are in the company of this person, or are you emotionally

drained? What is it about their words or actions that makes you feel this way?

Once you have done this, the next step is to understand what is motivating the person to behave this way with you. Is this how they are in general with other people too, or are you an easy target? If it is the former, how have others handled it when the person behaves this way with them? If it is the latter, what cues are you giving them to make them think their actions are condonable? Are you placing more stock in the relationship than they are, and consequently, are you more invested in keeping it alive than they are?

## Do's and don't's

Following this, consider what you want to do. You have probably put in a lot of time and effort to build the relationship up to where it is today. So, it is natural that you might want to salvage it. Start by talking to the person about how their actions or words make you feel and the impact it has on you. Call out this behaviour the next time they do it so that they become aware of it. Then, wait to see if your relationship with that person improves, over time.

However, what if the person doesn't change his/her behaviour? I think back to an article I read – about a mountaineer who scaled Everest. He was tantalisingly close to the summit, but was running dangerously low on oxygen. Rather than risk his life to achieve his goal, he made the difficult decision of turning back (he went on to make a successful attempt again, later). The point of the story is, even if you see rewards in maintaining a relationship with the person, do the risks outweigh the rewards? Sometimes, cutting ties might be what is best for you in the long run, even if it means a disruption in the short term. If this is the case, start limiting your interactions with the person and the amount of time you spend with them. Eventually, he/she will move on; if they don't, you might need to have a conversation with them about formally ending things and your reasons for this.

Invest in relationships that allow you to be your best self. You owe yourself that much.

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