

The
'Am I A
Toxic Leader?'
Diagnostic Tool

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Lead the way.

Okay, this one is uncomfortable.

You've seen toxic leadership, right?

But have you ever considered whether you share some of the same traits?

We all do.

Even you. Definitely me.

Read on to *learn when*.

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Let's start with some definitions:

Toxic leadership is characterised by behaviours that harm a team's morale, productivity, and well-being.

These behaviours create a negative environment, leading to high turnover, low engagement, and poor performance.

Understanding these toxic traits is the first step to avoiding them.

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9 Traits of a Toxic Leader

- 1) Creates a fearful environment
- 2) Lacks transparency
- 3) Undermines team efforts
- 4) Micromanages employees
- 5) Takes credit for others' work
- 6) Avoids accountability
- 7) Displays favouritism
- 8) Fails to provide constructive feedback
- 9) Encourages unhealthy competition

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Let's go through each of these one by one.

And measure your level of '*toxicity*'.

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Instructions:

The following diagnostic tools are designed to help you assess your toxic behaviours.

Rate yourself on each statement using the following scale:

0 = Never

1 = Rarely

2 = Sometimes

3 = Often

4 = Always

Total your scores to determine your level for each trait.

Trait 1: Creates a Fearful Environment

An environment where team members feel afraid of making mistakes or speaking up.

Key Indicators:

1. Intimidation: Using fear as a tool to control or motivate.
2. Punishment for Mistakes: Reacting harshly to errors, leading to a culture of fear.
3. Lack of Psychological Safety: Team members are afraid to express ideas or concerns.

My team members seem afraid to voice their opinions or concerns.

/ 4

I use threats or intimidation to enforce discipline.

/ 4

Mistakes are met with harsh criticism rather than constructive feedback.

/ 4

I notice that team members rarely take risks or suggest new ideas.

/ 4

My leadership style might make others feel anxious or uneasy.

/ 4

Total Score:

/ 20

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Trait 2: Lacks Transparency

When leaders withhold information or are not honest about decisions.

Key Indicators:

1. Withholding Information: Keeping team members in the dark about important decisions.
2. Inconsistent Communication: Providing partial or unclear information.
3. Secretive Behaviour: Making decisions behind closed doors without team input.

I withhold important information from my team.

/ 4

My communication is often vague or unclear.

/ 4

I make decisions without consulting my team or explaining the reasons.

/ 4

Team members frequently express confusion about what's going on.

/ 4

I prefer to keep certain information to myself, even if it affects the team.

/ 4

Total Score:

/ 20

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Trait 3: Undermines Team Efforts

A leader who undermines their team's efforts by publicly criticising team members, taking sides, or not giving credit where it's due.

Key Indicators:

1. Public Criticism: Criticising team members in front of others.
2. Sabotaging Success: Undermining team efforts or not supporting team initiatives.
3. Taking Sides: Favouring certain team members over others, leading to division.

I have publicly criticized a team member's work.

/ 4

I sometimes undermine the efforts of my team by not providing support.

/ 4

I favour certain team members, which creates division.

/ 4

I give credit for success to some team members but not others.

/ 4

I make decisions that benefit some team members at the expense of others.

/ 4

Total Score:

/ 20

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Trait 4: Micromanages Employees

Leaders who focus on minor details and control, rather than empowering their team.

Key Indicators:

1. **Over-Control:** Excessive involvement in every detail of the team's work.
2. **Lack of Delegation:** Reluctance to delegate tasks or trust others to do the work.
3. **Constant Monitoring:** Frequently checking on team members' progress and processes.

I frequently check in on my team's progress, even on minor tasks.

/ 4

I find it hard to delegate tasks to others.

/ 4

I often take over tasks that I should delegate.

/ 4

My team members feel they are being watched too closely.

/ 4

I am very involved in the day-to-day details of my team's work.

/ 4

Total Score:

/ 20

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Trait 5: Takes Credit for Others' Work

A leader who takes credit for others' work, especially their own team members.

Key Indicators:

1. Claiming Success: Taking full credit for team achievements.
2. Ignoring Contributions: Failing to acknowledge or reward the contributions of others.
3. Promoting Self over Team: Prioritising personal recognition over team success.

I have taken credit for a team member's idea or work.

/ 4

I rarely acknowledge individual contributions in team successes.

/ 4

I seek recognition for my team's work without including them.

/ 4

My team feels that their contributions go unnoticed.

/ 4

I focus on promoting my own success over the team's.

/ 4

Total Score:

/ 20

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Trait 6: Avoids Accountability

A leader who avoid taking responsibility for their actions or decisions.

Key Indicators:

1. **Blame Shifting:** Placing blame on others for mistakes.
2. **Refusing Responsibility:** Avoiding responsibility for outcomes or decisions.
3. **Lack of Ownership:** Failing to own up to personal or team failures.

I blame others for mistakes or failures of my team.

/ 4

I avoid taking responsibility for decisions that don't work out.

/ 4

I rarely admit when I am wrong.

/ 4

I find it hard to hold myself accountable in front of my team.

/ 4

I blame my team rather than myself when I do something wrong.

/ 4

Total Score:

/ 20

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Trait 7: Displays Favouritism

When leaders actively prefer some team members over others.

Key Indicators:

1. **Bias:** Showing preferential treatment to certain team members.
2. **Unequal Opportunities:** Offering more opportunities or rewards to favored individuals.
3. **Inconsistent Standards:** Holding different team members to different standards.

I have shown preferential treatment to certain team members.

/ 4

I provide more opportunities to those I favour.

/ 4

I hold some team members to different standards than others.

/ 4

My team perceives that I have favourites.

/ 4

My favouritism has caused division within my team.

/ 4

Total Score:

/ 20

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Trait 8: Fails to Provide Constructive Feedback

When leaders fail to provide constructive feedback, team members are left in the dark about their performance.

Key Indicators:

1. Lack of Feedback: Rarely providing feedback, either positive or negative.
2. Unclear Guidance: Giving vague or unhelpful feedback.
3. Missed Opportunities for Growth: Not using feedback as a tool for development.

I avoid providing feedback to my team members.

/ 4

The feedback I give is often vague or unhelpful.

/ 4

I miss opportunities to use feedback as a development tool.

/ 4

My team members are unclear about their performance expectations.

/ 4

I avoid difficult conversations about performance.

/ 4

Total Score:

/ 20

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Trait 9: Encourages Unhealthy Competition

When leaders encourage unhealthy competition among team members, stifling collaboration and damaging relationships.

Key Indicators:

1. Promoting Rivalry: Encouraging competition rather than collaboration.
2. Undermining Teamwork: Creating a culture where winning is more important than working together.
3. Rewarding Individual Success over Team Success: Prioritizing individual achievements at the expense of the team.

I encourage competition among team members.

/ 4

I reward individual success over team collaboration.

/ 4

We are more focused on beating each other than working together.

/ 4

Competition in my team has led to conflicts and division.

/ 4

I prioritize individual achievements even if it harms team dynamics.

/ 4

Total Score:

/ 20

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Take a deep breath.

Read on for the scoring system:

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For each trait, consider your score:

0-5: Low Risk

You are unlikely to exhibit this toxic behaviour but remain mindful to ensure it doesn't develop.

6-10: Moderate Risk

You may occasionally display this behaviour. It's important to monitor and work on reducing it.

11-15: High Risk

This behaviour is likely affecting your leadership. It's crucial to address it and make changes.

16-20: Severe Risk

This behaviour is significantly impacting your leadership and team. Immediate action is needed to eliminate this trait.

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Taking action:

1. *Interpreting Your Results:* Identify the toxic traits you may be exhibiting. Reflect on your scores and determine which areas need improvement.
2. *Setting Development Goals:* Use your diagnostic results to set specific goals to eliminate toxic behaviours. Focus on building a healthier, more positive leadership style.
3. *Continuous Improvement:* Leadership development is an ongoing process. Regularly reassess your behaviour, seek feedback, and adjust your approach to avoid toxic leadership practices.

So, how did you find this?

It's challenging. Unusual even.

But essential.

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