

## ***FOREWORD***

This book provides ways to identify potentially toxic personalities along with survival skills to deal with those who drive everyone around them crazy by "demanding much, giving little, and treating others shabbily." Everyone will exhibit some of the warning signs; however, beware of those who possess an overwhelming percentage of them. Toxic personalities rarely, if ever, accept blame or responsibility and operate from the primitive parts of their brains, which means that they lack compassion, empathy or insight into the consequences of their behavior. Change is difficult for them, which forces you to confront their unresolved issues over, and over, and over again while they lead you to believe that you are the crazy one.

There is no known cause or cure for toxic personalities. They tend to actively resist or avoid treatment. As a result, this book was designed to help those who live, work or associate with personality disorders who "perceive themselves as superior beings in a hostile, dog-eat-dog world in which others are competitors for power and resources (Hare 195)." Their game is winning at all costs. Ultimately, one has to decide if the price one is asked to pay is worth the cost of remaining with such a person -Ruthie O. Grant

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## **A Note From The Author**

In the tradition of Vietnamese author, Thich Nhat Hahn, this material is not set forth as "absolute truths," but rather, as "guiding principles" to help one identify toxic personalities, and then determine, through the information provided, if one can find a way to co-exist with that person without being driven crazy; if it is time to seek professional help; or, if it is in the best interest of both parties to dissolve the relationship. In the latter situation, this book provides help in overcoming the emotional damage done to one's self image and self esteem by toxic personalities.

The author respects the timeless and ageless universality of truth and presents it without attachment to doctrines, individuals, or belief systems. Overall, the goal is to remind readers that "you are the one you are looking for" (Audre Lourde) and that "to love oneself is the beginning of a life long romance" (Oscar Wilde). The book is not intended as a substitute for professional help or intervention. For additional resources, a list of reference materials is provided.

A great deal of the research in Part II and III is simplified, condensed, excerpted, and/or adapted

## *I Thought I Was The Crazy One*

from the works of authors, philosophers, metaphysicians and experts who came before me. I wish to acknowledge them and honor the path they have laid out for others to follow, which prevents one from having to reinvent the wheel.

My goal was to come up with a single, concise little book that contains pearls of wisdom from many sources that go right to the heart of relationship and self esteem issues addressed in this book.

In Part III, I am indebted to the following authors: Lorna S. Benjamin, Catherine Cardinal, Barbara De'Angelis, Donald G. Dutton, Dr. Riane Eisler, Thich Nhat Hanh, Gina O'Connell Higgins, Carolyn Heilbrun, L. Ron Hubbard, Alyce LaViolette, Jan Kennedy, Dr. Victoria Lee, Dr. Gregory W. Lester, Barry Long, Maya Pines, Linda Sanford & Mary E. Donovan, Dr. Len Sperry, Neale Donald Walsh, and Marianne Williamson.

In Part I and Part II, I am indebted to a long list of authors whose names are acknowledged on each page after their quotes. - Ruthie O. Grant

## ***PREFACE***

Our culture and society can define us, our expectations, dreams, and to some degree, our realities. For many, that may mean a life characterized by adaptation. Most people learn more about the needs of others than they do about their own needs. Many believe their value is defined by their attachment to a man or a woman.

For some, being single is worse than living with an emotionally or physically violent person. The critical point is to believe that we are as important to ourselves as we make our significant others important to us. We need to look to see who fits for us. Compatibility of values is a key issue. If you understand your own "bottom line" you will be able to discern whether or not this person shares them - not just in word but in action. Men or women who may be dangerous to your self-image often let you know by "advising," "parenting," "pouting," or "putting down." Others "spray" their territory, marking their property -- that property may be you.

Most of us don't pay attention to the clues that could tell us we are with a potential Jack the Ripper, or Lizzy Borden. This book provides clues to prevent one from overlooking the obvious. All too often we sweep the evidence under the carpet. First things first--pay attention to the evidence. It is important to Beware of a Person Who ... leads but will not follow; reacts at a level where you begin to alter your behavior because of an anticipated over-reaction; and, is rigid and inflexible when faced with change. If a relationship is a good one, we can be proud of the person we are in that relationship with.

**-ALYCE LaVIOLETTE, M.S., MFCC,  
Founder of ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE**

## INTRODUCTION

"I Thought I Was The Crazy One" contains, on each page, one clear warning of problems that might develop should you ignore these warnings. Expect to grow if you heed them. Beware of ignoring them: You could become a statistic.

This is a book full of information you need to live a positive, productive life, and to have a healthy relationship with the most important person in your life: yourself. I'm proud to be associated with this book.

No one needs permission to have rights and responsibilities. A healthy relationship includes respect for individuals and their differences.

The "Theater of Hope For Abused Women" has a brochure that lists "Your Rights and Responsibilities." They include: "to feel safe and live without fear, especially in your own home; to say no without feeling guilty and selfish; to establish goals and to work toward attaining those goals; to express your feelings and the right to choose not to; to privacy; to socialize with others; to change yourself; to ask for help; not to be perfect."

-MARJI MARTIN, President  
WOMEN'S ENTERTAINMENT NETWORK



# Beware of a Person Who ...

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## PART I

### 201 WAYS TO IDENTIFY AND DEAL WITH TOXIC PERSONALITIES

He will choose you, disarm you with his words, and control you with his presence. He will delight you with his wit and his plans. He will show you a good time, but you will always get the bill. He will smile and deceive you, and he will scare you with his eyes. And when he is through with you, and he will be through with you, he will desert you and take with him your innocence and your pride. You will be left much sadder but not a lot wiser, and for a long time you will wonder what happened and what you did wrong. And if another of his kind comes knocking at your door, will you open it?

-Excerpted from an essay signed "A Psychopath in Prison"

-From "Without Conscience" by Robert D. Hare, PhD

# Beware of a Person Who ...

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*is a Tinman or Tinwoman (unfaithful heartbreakers) with holes in their hearts so big no one man or woman can ever fill them up. Have the foresight and fortitude to kick the Tinman or Tinwoman habit.*

*[Note: The following also applies to women] "Some men need the security of a steady relationship to feel confident enough to chase women. That's why you may not realize he's a lady's man at first: until he is sure he has you hooked, and knows his bait works, he is too insecure to troll for other romantic prey." -Carol Lieberman, M.D. & Lisa Cool*

# Beware of a Person Who ...

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*amputates sexuality from a meaningful act of love. Since he or she cannot connect common sense with the seat of passion, this type will use sex as a substitute for emotional closeness.*

*"Controlling and/or abusive men or women "confuse sexuality with intimacy and offer their partners sex rather than emotional closeness." -Hawker & Bicehouse*

*Tom Stoppard in "The Real Thing" defined love as knowing and being known. In ancient Greece knowing was used for making love, or carnal knowledge - knowledge of the self -- the mask slipped from the face. Every other version of the self is an offer to the public." -Arianna Huffington*

# Beware of a Person Who ...

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*finds fault in others without examining his or her own shortcomings. A wise person will strive not to marry weaknesses, nor make lovers of them, but will work hard at overcoming his or her own faults. Anyone overly critical of others is obviously not sure of self.*

*"Men [and women] will preserve the errors of their childhood, of their country, and of their age long after having recognized all the truths needed to destroy them." -Marquis de Condorat*

*"When a man [or woman] spends his/her time giving his/her wife/husband criticism and advice instead of compliments, he/she forgets that it was not his/her good judgment, but his/her charming manners, that won his/her heart."-Helen Rowland*

# Beware of a Person Who ...

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*is attracted to strong women or men only to rob them of their power. As a child, an adult probably made this type feel powerless. Now someone has to pay for the pain. That someone is you. An abusive person will beat you down emotionally before beating you up physically. Leave once the verbal abuse begins. This will help the abuser realize that there are consequences for bad behavior.*

*"Power abdicates only under the stress of counter power."  
-Martin Buber*

# Beware of a Person Who ...

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*has serious character deficits (i.e. dishonesty, laziness, insensitivity, etc). It is commonly known that those with character disorders make every one else miserable. Unless this person is actively working on changing bad character traits, you are in for a lifetime of misery. Leave this one to wallow in dysfunction alone.*

*"When those with character disorders are in conflict with the world they automatically assume the world is at fault ... [and are] impossible to work with because they don't see themselves as the source of their problems [and] fail to recognize the necessity for self examination." -M. Scott Peck*

## PART II

### *Understanding Toxic Personalities*

*Good people are rarely suspicious: they cannot imagine others doing the things they themselves are incapable of doing ... The normal are inclined to visualize the [psychopath] as one who's as monstrous in appearance as he is in mind, which is about as far from the truth as one could well get ... These monsters of real life presented a more convincing picture of viture than virtue presented of itself.*

*-William March, "The Bad Seed"*

*Although no one is immune to the devious machinations of the psychopath, there are some things you can do to reduce your vulnerability.*

*-Robert D. Hare, Phd, "Without Conscience"*

***THE SOCIAL RELEVANCE OF  
UNDERSTANDING TOXIC PERSONALITIES  
aka Personality Disorders, Sociopaths, or Psychopaths***

Very few psychopaths commit crimes [of torture and mutilation]. Their callousness typically emerges in less dramatic, though still devastating ways: parasitically bleeding other people of their possessions, savings, and dignity; aggressively doing and taking what they want; shamefully neglecting the physical and emotional welfare of their families; engaging in an unending series of casual, impersonal, and trivial sexual relationships; and so forth (Hare 45).

-Dr. Robert D. Hare Without Conscience

The total pattern of the psychopath's personality differentiates him from the normal criminal. His aggression is more intense, his impulsivity more pronounced, his emotional reactions more shallow. His guiltlessness, however, is the critical distinguishing trait. The normal criminal has an internalized, albeit warped, set of values. If he violates these standards he feels guilt.

-McCord and McCord. *The Psychopath: An Essay on the Criminal Mind*

Dr. Gregory W. Lester, an expert on personality disorders, feels that it is important to understand personality disorders because they make up 16-20% of the general population and appear to be rapidly increasing in prevalence. They also make up 59-100% of the clinical population; are



associated with spouse abuse 80-90% of the time; are connected to compulsive addictive disorders nearly 65% of the time; and, some categories have suicide and homicide rates far above that of the general population. They are also nearly always underestimated and underidentified by social workers and other health and mental health professionals (Lester<sup>1-2</sup>). *Gregory W. Lester, PhD* gives workshops and seminars all over the U.S. to social workers and mental health professionals who treat personality disorders and is the author of Personality Disorders in Social Work Practice.

The Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM-IV) in 1994, defined a personality disorder as "*an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the individual's culture, is pervasive and inflexible, has an onset in adolescence or early adulthood, is stable over time, and leads to distress or impairment.*"

The three personality disorders that cause the most chaos in relationships are: *Narcissistic* (NPD), *Borderline* (BPD), and *Antisocial* (APD). All three have overlapping traits. Since there are

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eleven different personality disorders listed in the DSM-IV, the author grouped the three most troublesome ones under the term "toxic personalities" for ease of reference in this book.

***Definition of Narcissistic:*** The narcissistic personality disorder can be recognized by a "grandiose sense of self-importance; recurrent fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty or ideal love; a craving for constant attention and admiration; feelings of rage, humiliation, or haughty indifference when criticized or defeated; and at least two of the following: a sense of entitlement; exploitiveness, the tendency to take advantage of others and to disregard their rights; oscillation between extreme over idealization and devaluation of others; and lack of empathy, meaning not just an inability to recognize how others feel, but often an inability to see that others have feelings at all" (Pines C-1).

Sanford and Donovan, in their book Women and Self-Esteem, point out that the difficulty with identifying narcissistic personality disorders in males as a serious societal problem that needs addressing, is due to our double standard prevalent

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# **PART III**

**AFTER THE STORM**

**REINVENTING RELATIONSHIPS AND  
RECOVERING SELF ESTEEM**

## **RESILIENT PERSONALITY TRAITS**

Often, we get out of one dysfunctional relationship and jump right back into another one. When this happens, we have either failed to learn the lesson from the previous relationship, failed to set minimum standards, or failed to establish boundaries for ourselves; usually, due to ignorance. Since we live in a violent, dominator society, most of us end up part of the "walking wounded." It is refreshing and revitalizing, however, to run across resilient survivors who are still fully capable of loving. In spite of emotional and/or physical wounds, resilient people magically manage to end up with their hearts intact. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the majority of the walking wounded, who are incapable of fully loving themselves, which makes it impossible for toxic people to truly love anyone else.

The following traits and characteristics, adapted from Gina O'Connell Higgins' book "Resilient Adults-Overcoming a Cruel Past," help one to size up a potential mate, friend, or business associate, in terms of mental and emotional

## *I Thought I Was The Crazy One*

toughness, or the ability to handle an authentic, peaceful, and loving relationship.

Resilience is defined as the ability to love, along with unusually high levels of functioning in the face of adversity (Higgins 19). Even though toxic personalities may have encountered the same or similar adverse circumstances in life, the resilient person is able to learn from the experience and overcome it. On the other hand, the toxic person has great difficulty learning from experience. He or she fails to take responsibility for his or her actions or reactions, and often becomes embittered by circumstances, vindictive, or worse-for-wear after an encounter with adversity or disappointment, even when at fault. Adult loving is the least expected outcome of a hateful past, yet resilient adults are able to love fully. Toxic people are not (Higgins 23).

Resilient Adults are most repeatedly characterized and described in studies as follows: Above average intellectual competence, cognitive flexibility, information seeking, reflective planning, good school performance, positive appraisal of school experiences, internal locus of control (i.e.

self-control), rational competence with individuals and extended support systems, voluntary and/or mandatory helpfulness in childhood and adolescence, high self esteem, good impulse control, and possession of special talents and inner resources (Higgins 22). In addition, resilient adults also possess the following traits. They:

- Are committed to a measured perspective on the poisonous aspects of the past (believes he or she is the agent of his or her own happiness and is determined not to be subordinated to his or her own suffering);
- Are resolved not to repeat their parents' folly;
- Draw a firm distinction between understanding abusive adults and forgiving them. Holds abusive adults (i.e. parents) fully accountable for their abusive treatment. Believes that reflexively forgiving unrepentant, abusive parents would lead to self betrayal if the parents do not ask for forgiveness or acknowledge the damage and pain they have caused. For that reason, the resilient adult does not love the