

# Drop out of the Negativity Club

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We are responsible for who we associate with and how those individuals negatively or positively impact our lives.

If you are going to be successful, you have to start hanging out with successful people. Often, we fall into a pattern of spending time with the same people, and inevitably, we experience the same results from these relationships. It is important to identify the positive and negative people in your life. Who is encouraging, inspiring and helpful in your pursuit of success, and who is dissuading you from your goals, discouraging and toxic? This is a key principle to your success.

Do you know people who only have to walk into the room to totally drain you of energy? Are there people in your life who, simply by calling you on the telephone, create tension, stress and disorder in your day? What about people who brighten a room when they enter it? Do you have friends, mentors and others in your life who radiates energy, optimism, support and encouragement?

While it's always interesting to ask yourself what kind of person you are, the Success Principle to learn here is that there are both nourishing people in our lives — and toxic ones. Toxic people are negative. They're dream-stealers. And although they often don't know they're doing it, they dissuade us from our goals, keep us from achieving excellence, tell us we're not worthy and constantly attempt to bring us down to their level.

By contrast, positive people are nurturing, empowering, inspiring, encouraging, supportive and proactively helpful. They believe in you and applaud you. They're possibility thinkers, fun to be around and they feel you deserve to succeed at the highest possible level."

### **How to recognize a toxic person**

The following exercise illustrates how widespread negativity is in our culture. Close your eyes for a moment and imagine your neighbor just won the lottery. Not a little jackpot, but a million dollars a year for life. How do you feel?

"I can tell you most people feel resentful. Instead of responding with, 'Way to go! One of my friends hit the jackpot!'—most people react negatively. They are jealous and feel resentful. Unfortunately, the negative reaction to this training exercise is not too different from real life. In fact, some toxic people are actually addicted to negativity. Toxic personalities actually need to keep you from succeeding at a higher level because you threaten their level of comfort. They're happy being negative and mediocre. Yet you threaten to expose this side of their personality when you are ambitious, goal oriented, forward thinking and positive. To counteract this threat from you, toxic people try to discourage you from moving ahead. They say things like: 'Oh, who are you kidding? You'll never do that. There's never been a kid from this neighborhood who went to college. There's never been someone from this department who made Vice-President. Remember the last time you tried that? It was a total failure. You always work late. Why

not take the night off and go shopping with me? I'll buy you dinner. Don't come crying to me when the whole thing blows up in your face. They'll never let a college student do that. Why try? You always gain the weight back. Take it from me. I know. This whole idea is a mistake.

Unfortunately, all too often, comments like these leave us wondering, 'What if I am making a mistake? What if I do fail?' Suddenly, you're telling yourself, 'Yeah, they're right. Who am I kidding? I'll never be able to do that.'"

Spend more time with positive people.

By contrast, you want people in your life who say, 'Great idea! You can do that! Here's what you'll need. How can I help?'

Positive people coach us. They mentor us. They're proactively helpful. They come through with ideas that help us expand on our goal. They make us believe we can achieve all that and more. And, the good news is, positive people are easy to find. Perhaps they're part of your friendship circle right now. In fact, they might be delighted to spend more time with you. If you let toxic people steal your future, you have no one to blame but yourself. The truth is, toxic people often have tremendous power over us. They have the ability to change our minds and our hearts. They have the power to crush our self esteem and diminish our passion — but only if we let them.

And while it's simple to stay away from toxic people, it isn't always easy to do so. In other words, it's simple to decide to avoid them, to put boundaries in place and to stand by those boundaries. But the difficulty for most people comes in deflecting — not giving in to — their toxic reactions. When they bombard you with guilt, try to dissuade you, manipulate you and try to turn you from your path, it's merely their negativity in play. Setting boundaries and saying 'no' often are the only tools we have to combat these negative forces.

### **Tips for setting boundaries with toxic people**

Sometimes toxic people are our family members; other times they are a co-worker or boss. In these cases, we can't just avoid them altogether, so we have to put boundaries in place to minimize their negative effects on our time, priorities and selfworth.

There are several ways to do this. Here are a few tips.

Minimize your contact, if possible. While most people are not fortunate enough to have their own personal assistant to take calls, if you do, simply ask your assistant not to put calls through from specific individuals you name. If you work independently and answer your own phone, invest in caller ID, and don't return voice-mail messages, or simply tell a toxic caller you're on an important deadline and can't talk at length. Spend holidays out of town.

One response that's helpful in saying 'no' to crisis appeals or time-robbing requests from people is...

'It's not against you — It's for me.'

When the local PTA chairman calls with yet another weekend fund-raising event that needs your dedication, you can say, 'You know, I'd really love to, but the fact is I've made a commitment to spend more time with my family. I realized I had overcommitted myself outside my home life, so even though I support what you're doing; now my commitment is my family.'

Few people get angry at others for making and standing by a higher commitment. And while techniques like these will get toxic people out of your life in very short order, you may experience emotional responses to your boundaries. Just remember, other people's responses are their responsibility, not yours.

Guilt is the real enemy.

One of the most powerful weapons toxic people use is guilt. Where does guilt come from? It stems from our need for approval. All too often, we're more interested in how we're accepted, than in the results we produce. We risk giving in to our own feelings of guilt when we constantly seek approval.

So, if you want to be successful, you must give up the need for approval. You must give up guilt feelings and guilt responses that are the mind's natural reaction when seeking approval. Whether it's your mother, the school committee, the PTA chairman, your boss or your friends, as long as you are willing to feel guilty, you can be manipulated away from your path to success.

This exercise gives participants a clear view of how their associations with other people impact them and underlines the need for participants to surround themselves with positive, optimistic, supportive, encouraging, goal-seeking and success-oriented people.

Avoid toxic people and surround yourself with positive and successful people. You'll eventually reach a point at which you can put yourself in a negative situation and be a beacon of light, like Mother Theresa, the Dalai Lama, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela or Mahatma Gandhi. People who bring others light don't need to have other people affirming them or agreeing with them. They just hold that positive, unconditionally loving focus, which a spiritually enlightened person can do.

However, most of us are not there yet, and until we are, one of the ways to get ourselves there is to stop spending time around negative people. It is difficult at first. I've had to let go of some friends of mine along the way. This doesn't mean you have to go back and eliminate all the negative friends from your life, but what it does mean is that you

purposely choose where you put yourself. Make an effort to spend more of your time with uplifting and positive people.

On the handout provided below (or on a blank piece of paper) write down the names of all the people you spend time with on a consistent basis. Parents, children, colleagues, coworkers, spouses, neighbors, church members, classmates, teachers and people you do hobbies with — go fishing with, hunting — whatever it might be.

Make a list and now just put a plus or a minus sign next to each person's name. Put a plus sign if you find that the majority of their influence on your life is positive, nurturing and encouraging. Put a minus sign if that person's influence is predominantly negative. Some people when you're with them, leave you feeling drained as opposed to uplifted. They literally suck the life out of you.

We're talking about the main energy of these two kinds of people—positive or negative. If you're not sure, just guess... If it seems like 50/50, just pick one or the other. Don't worry about it; it doesn't have to be perfect.

You now have a list of people whom you consider to be a positive influence, as well as people you consider to be a negative influence. You can do whatever you want with that, but I encourage you to find ways to expand the time you spend with the positive people in your life, and figure out how to spend less or no time with those who are negative.

There is a principle we call the Law of the Vacuum. If you eliminate a negative in your life and you focus on the positive, you've created a space that has to draw in the positive. This is the Law of Attraction at work.

If you eliminate something negative in your life and you don't replace it with a positive, the Law of the Vacuum will pull the negative back in. Also, if you start adding more positive friends into your life, some of the more negative ones will eventually drift or fall away.

### **Who Would You Rather Spend Time With?**

List all of the people who have significant influence on you (positive or negative) or that you spend significant time with, in person or on the phone. For each name, add a plus sign if they are a positive influence or a minus sign if they are a negative influence. If they are neutral or have no impact, leave it blank.



Now look at it from a positive side. Who is involved in your life that has a positive influence? What new or expanded associations could you create?

<b>Expand (E) or New (N)</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Why</b>

What was the greatest insight from doing this exercise?