

TOXIC FRIENDS

For years, American psychologists have told romantic couples how to repair their **rifts**. But now therapists are being visited by troubled patients who want to know how to **get rid** of those “friends” who are ruining their lives. More than 10,000 psychologists and counsellors are offering sessions on relationships with friends in America. The phrase “toxic friends” is becoming common and has been recognised by the American Psychological Association. The publishing industry has quickly reacted with a succession of books with titles such as *Toxic friends / true friends* or *A Smart Girl’s Guide to Friendship*, that are at the top of the American best-sellers list.

According to psychologists, these toxic friends come in several forms: the passive aggressive debilitator, who delivers cruel criticisms dressed up as friendly questions; the naysayer, who **undermines** all your initiatives; the planbreaker, who **ditches** you at the last minute; and the non-stoppers, who won’t let you go home when you want to because they want you to solve their personal problems.

To deal with all these kinds of problematic friendships, Christine Northman, a relationship counsellor, has a common approach. She says that in order to maintain our emotional health in friendship there must be a level of reciprocity, so friendships need to be frequently evaluated. She says: “Only with emotional maturity can we see ourselves and our relationships more clearly. It can seem a bit cruel to break up friendships, but sometimes all we need to do is put some **boundaries** around ‘toxic’ friends: keep them in our lives but see them less frequently.”

Not treating the “toxic friends” problem can have unhealthy consequences. A recent study found that when people meet a person who is considered a toxic friend their heart rates and blood pressure increase. Most therapists agree that toxic friendships are a more difficult problem for women than for men. Males, having a much lower **threshold** for complications in friendships, will disconnect themselves from a negative friendship more easily, and faster, than women. Women friends can become “energy vampires” like the “crying sister” who keeps you on the phone for two hours with problems but no solutions and who leaves you exhausted.

Not everyone is convinced that therapy is the answer, though. For some, it is part of the problem rather than the solution. Mike Albo, a self-help American writer, thinks that the psychological literature and the self-help industry have taught these toxic friends a new kind of language. With it, they are trying to convince us that we rather than they might be having some sort of psychological problem. “One thing that worries me about friendship counselling is that underminers predominate in the self-help society,” Albo says. By accepting the type of discourse that is common among therapists we might be internalising a problem we didn’t have in the first place.

Mike Albo has also another warning for those confronting toxic friends: “Listen to their side of it because perhaps it’s you who is toxic.”

The Sunday Telegraph. Adapted

rift: esquerda, desavenença / fisura, distanciamiento

get rid: desfer-se / deshacerse

undermine: sabotear / sabotear

ditch: deixar plantat / dejar plantado

boundaries: limits / límites

threshold: llindar / umbral

Part 1: Reading comprehension

Choose the best answer according to the text. Only ONE answer is possible.

[0.5 points each correct answer. Wrong answers will be penalized by deducting 0.16 points. There is no penalty for unanswered questions.]

		A emplenar pel corrector/a		
		Correcta	Incorrecta	No contestada
1.	According to the text a “toxic friend” is... <input type="checkbox"/> a friend who improves your self-esteem. <input type="checkbox"/> an invention of psychologists. <input type="checkbox"/> a friend who can make your life difficult. <input type="checkbox"/> a friend who is a drug addict.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	“Toxic friend” is an expression thought up by... <input type="checkbox"/> the self-help industry. <input type="checkbox"/> therapists. <input type="checkbox"/> no one in particular but it’s becoming widely accepted. <input type="checkbox"/> the American Psychological Association.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Which of these definitions best describes a naysayer? <input type="checkbox"/> A tactful friend, always trying to be polite to his/her friends. <input type="checkbox"/> A friend who will never be supportive of things we want to do. <input type="checkbox"/> A violent person who denies his/her real mean intentions. <input type="checkbox"/> A busy person having no time to say anything to his/her friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Christine Northman affirms that we should... <input type="checkbox"/> visit friends more often to keep up our emotional health. <input type="checkbox"/> visit friends to keep reciprocity in friendship. <input type="checkbox"/> analyse our relationships with our friends very often. <input type="checkbox"/> not care too much about friendship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	When treating the “toxic friend” problem, counsellors advise us to... <input type="checkbox"/> see them within the boundaries of the city. <input type="checkbox"/> avoid them forever. <input type="checkbox"/> give those friends a chance. <input type="checkbox"/> avoid them from time to time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Most therapists agree that the “toxic friend” problem... <input type="checkbox"/> mostly affects stressed women. <input type="checkbox"/> does not affect happy people. <input type="checkbox"/> is more frequent among weak people. <input type="checkbox"/> is easier to solve for men.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	A “crying sister” could be defined as a person who... <input type="checkbox"/> ditches you on the last minute. <input type="checkbox"/> is always crying on the phone. <input type="checkbox"/> tires you telling you about her problems. <input type="checkbox"/> takes away all your energy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	Mike Albo thinks that... <input type="checkbox"/> therapy can solve all your problems with undesirable toxic friends. <input type="checkbox"/> self-help books are the only solution for our psychological problems. <input type="checkbox"/> the toxic friends’s problem cannot always be solved by therapy. <input type="checkbox"/> toxic friends not therapists always tell you the truth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Correctes	Incorrectes	No contestades
Recompte de les respostes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nota de comprensió escrita	<input type="text"/>		