

# Toxic Resilience Workbook

*Toxicity that corrupts the way we bounce back from pressure & tension*



## Rule of Life

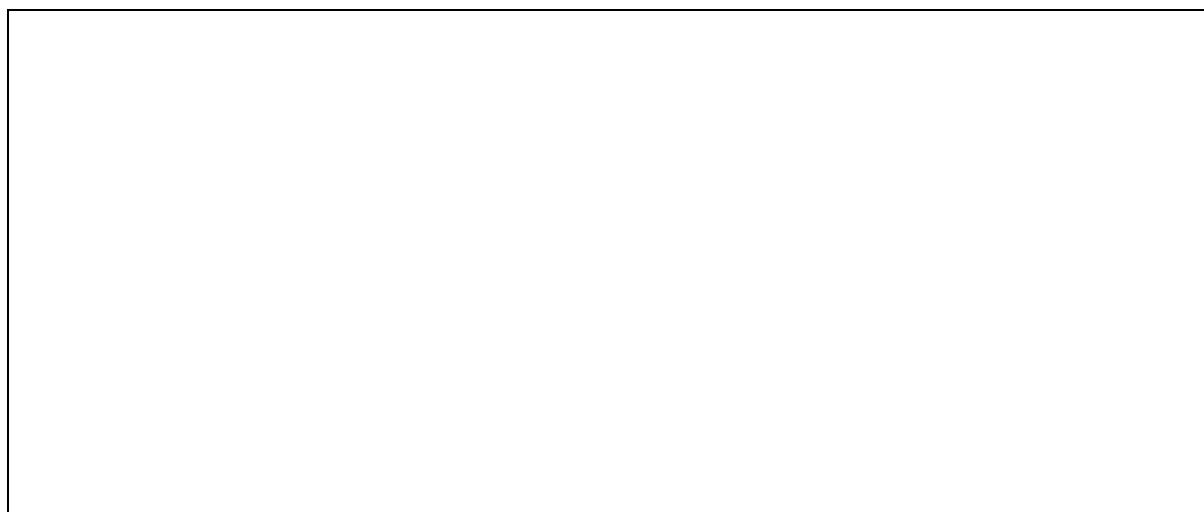
- Developer of resilience
- Maintainer of resilience
- Restorer of resilience

That Rule describes the way we pray each day, the way we read our Bible, and the way we choose to behave. So, what's critical to your Rule of Life?

## Toxic Ruler & Environment



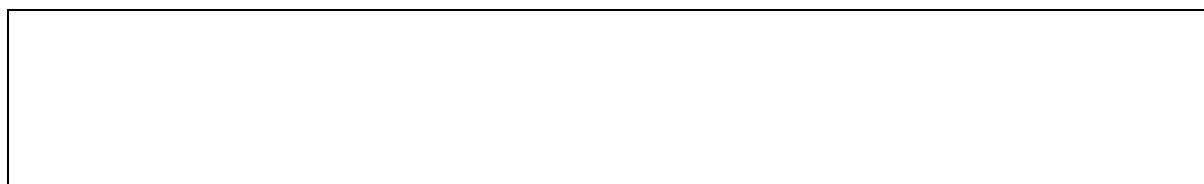
Toxic bounce-back can be the result of living or working in a toxic environment.



## Toxic Leadership Definitions

### US Military

*"Toxic leadership is a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance. This leader lacks concern for others and the climate of the organization, which leads to short- and long-term negative effects. The toxic leader operates with an inflated sense of self-worth and from acute self-interest. Toxic leaders consistently use dysfunctional behaviors to deceive, intimidate, coerce, or unfairly punish others to get what they want for themselves. The negative leader completes short-term requirements by operating at the bottom of the continuum of commitment, where followers respond to the positional power of their leader to fulfill requests. This may achieve results in the short term, but ignores the other leader competency categories of leads and develops. Prolonged use of negative leadership to influence followers undermines the followers' will, initiative, and potential and destroys unit morale."<sup>1</sup>*



<sup>1</sup> David Sloan Wilson, "Toxic Leaders And The Social Environments That Breed Them", *Forbes* (Jan 10, 2014), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/darwinatwork/2014/01/10/toxic-leaders-and-the-social-environments-that-breed-them/#10f1039dac53> (last accessed 1/5/19)

## Psychological Analysis

Behavioural psychologists have done considerable work in corporate culture as well. Dr Jean Kim identifies these 8 toxic characteristics:<sup>2</sup>

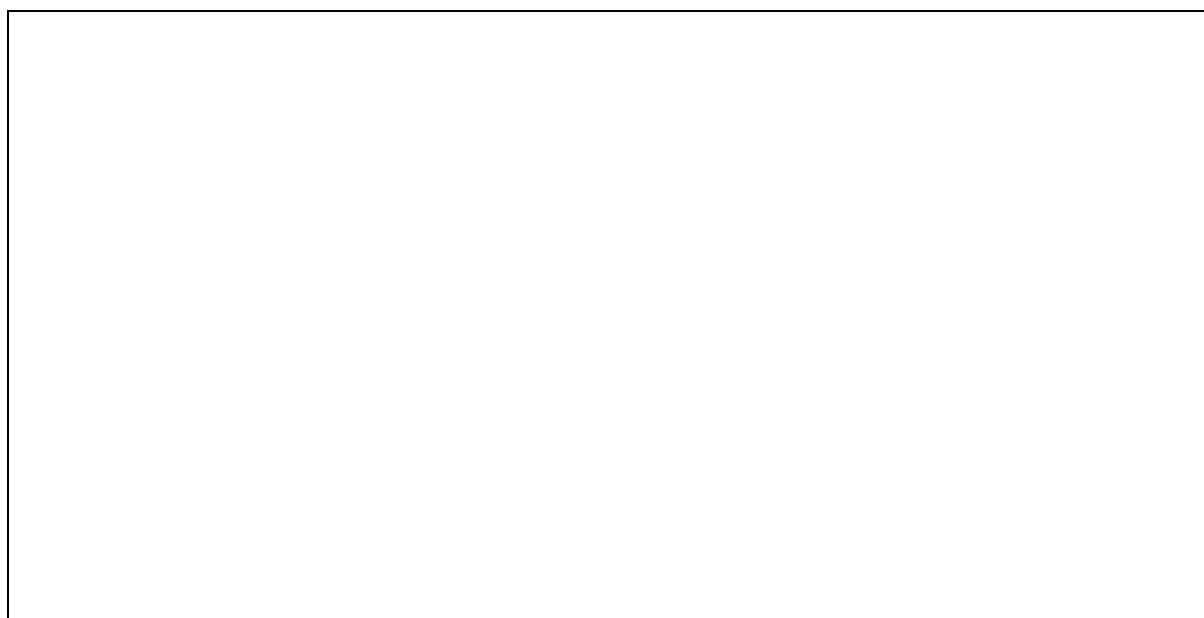
1. Unwillingness to listen to feedback
2. Excessive self-promotion and self-interest
3. Lying and inconsistency
4. Lack of moral philosophy
5. Rewarding incompetence and lack of accountability
6. Lack of general support and mentoring
7. Cliquishness (star-bellied Sneetches)
8. Bullying and Harassment



## Conflict Averse Culture

Definition: a tendency to avoid conflict and confrontation.

*"My concern will be to show love, care and compassion.  
God give me courage to strive for justice and peace among all people." (ANZPB 905)*



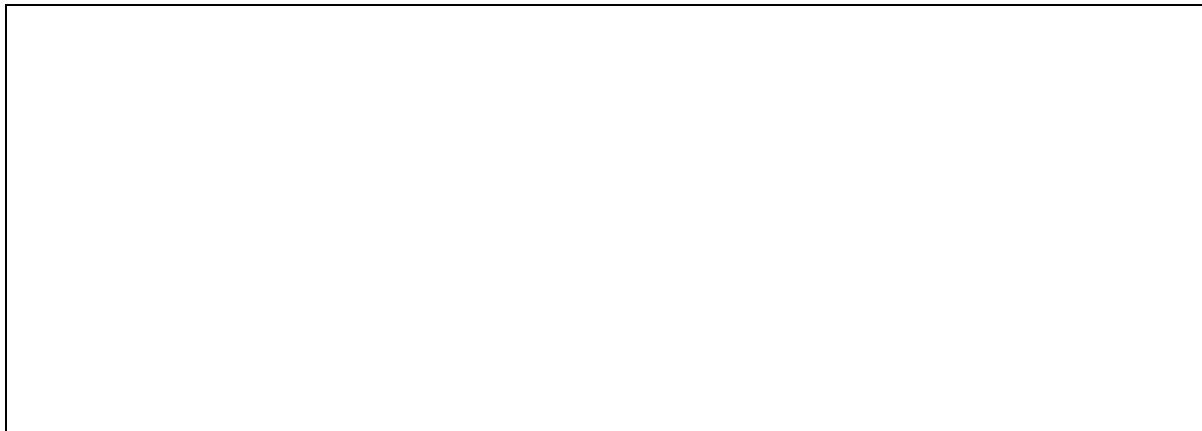
---

<sup>2</sup> Psychology Today (July 6, 2016) <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/culture-shrink/201607/8-traits-toxic-leadership-avoid> (last accessed 1/5/19)

## Diagnosis and Treatment

*"The most important step in detecting and treating toxic [behaviour] is to recognise the symptoms."<sup>3</sup>*

Once we have recognised the symptoms we can begin to dig into the causes. Just like a doctor, we have to ask questions, record a detailed history, talk about any other relevant problems in the patient's wider family, and so on. If we focus just on the presenting issue we run the risk of missing the root cause.



## Strategy

### Classifying Toxicity

- |                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| • Misperception     | Toxic Goggles   |
| • Gatekeeping       | Toxic Exclusion |
| • Individualism     | Toxic Isolation |
| • Judgementalism    | Toxic Dōm       |
| • Boundary-breaking | Toxic Fruits    |
| • Bullying          | Toxic Forces    |



At some stage in our ministry we will be exposed to all of these toxic behaviours. The fundamental challenge is to recognise the behaviour for what it is and choose to do something about it. This challenge is mission critical.

## Options

"There are only three options: take it, leave it, change it."

(Marsha Petrie Sue, *The Reactor Factor : How to handle difficult work situations without going nuclear*, 2010)

"Transforming toxic leaders [or cultures] is not a feasible option for individual subordinates alone-it is an organizational and systemic responsibility."

(Marco Tavanti, *Managing Toxic Leaders: Dysfunctional Patterns*, 2011))

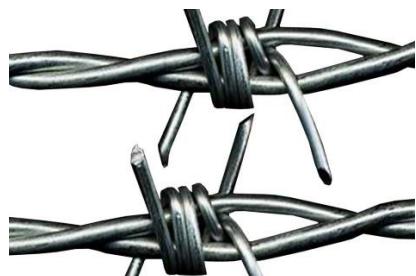
---

<sup>3</sup> (Reed, *Toxic Leadership*, 2004)

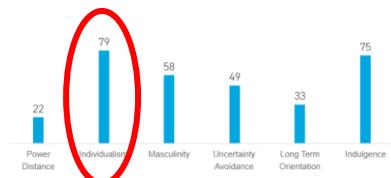
### Toxic Goggles



### Toxic Exclusion



### Toxic Isolation



### Toxic Dōm



<p>Toxic Fruits</p> 	
<p>Toxic Forces</p> 	

## Treatment | Things to remember

- While there may be three options, as a leader your choice must always be “change it”.
- It is unrealistic to attempt this on your own, so think about who your key support people are (in your community and hierarchy).
- Not all toxicity is deadly (self-awareness and communication are critical).
- Focus on the behaviour not the person.
- Always look at the wider culture: often we blame toxicity on individuals without reference to the culture and context they are embedded in.

## Questions

- What toxic behaviours am I aware of in my community?
- What's driving the behaviour?
- What contribution am I making to this culture?
- Why am I doing that?
- How do these behaviours affect that community?
- What is being done to name and overcome these toxic behaviours?
- What can I do to make a difference?
- Who can I ask for help?

## Notes

## Bibliography

- Kim, Jean. 2016. *Psychology Today: 8 Traits of Toxic Leadership to Avoid*. 06 July. Accessed 2019.  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/culture-shrink/201607/8-traits-toxic-leadership-avoid>.
- Reed, George E & Olsen, Richard A. 2010 (Nov-Dec). "Toxic Leadership: Part Deux." *Military Review* 58-64.
- Reed, George. 2002 (January). "Toxic Leadership." *US Army War College* 67-71.
- Sue, Marsha Petrie. 2009. *The Reactor Factor : How to Handle Difficult Work Situations Without Going Nuclear*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Tavanti, Marco. 2011. "Managing Toxic Leaders: Dysfunctional Patterns in Organizational Leadership and How to Deal with Them." *Human Resource Management*, June: 127-136.
- Waititi, Taika. 2017. *Give Nothing To Racism*. Directed by NZ Human Rights Commission. Performed by Taika Waititi.

## Summary | Toxic Resilience

Toxicity that corrupts the way we bounce back from pressure & tension

Healthy resilience enables us to bounce back into shape when recovering from and responding to stress and tension. This positive resilience can build over time like a well-exercised muscle leaving us better equipped to deal with the next challenge.

Toxic resilience describes a bounce-back from stress and tension that harms ourselves and/or others. The pressure that we have experienced has revealed flaws or weaknesses that distort our normal behaviour. We may recover at one level but also see and experience the world differently. In an effort to protect ourselves or others from further damage we might be more aggressive, emotional, judgemental, private, detached ... Given time these behaviours can become our new normal – the benchmark to which we return after subsequent pressure.

Where healthy resilience aims to conform us to the image of Christ, toxic resilience corrupts that effort and leaves us deformed. There are many factors that influence this process, but ultimately we must work together to identify toxic behaviour and treat it. We have a responsibility to God, one another—and those still to be converted—to provide a space in which the Gospel can flourish.

# #notinourchurch