


Warning Signs of Toxicity

Many people can show one or more of the following traits, so the presence of warning signs (in particular) shouldn't necessarily be viewed as deal breakers. Rather, you are encouraged to complete the following checklist for a variety of people in your life to compare and contrast various patterns, the specific traits that led to undesired outcomes, and trends of dynamics that you find yourself in.


Definitive Threat (more than mere risk)

Does this person....?	No (0)	Yes (1)
1. Glorify or fantasize about violence toward others / Wish harm or death on others		
2. Antagonize and/or dehumanize others		
3. Demonstrate sexist, racist, ableist, etc. behaviors or attitudes (specific forms of dehumanization)		
4. Devalue others (assigning exaggerated negative qualities while disregarding the good)		
5. Show overt or covert disregard for others		
6. Lack empathy or show inconsistent empathy		
7. Feel justified for hurting others or behaving in immoral ways		
8. Exploit others' vulnerabilities (including those vulnerable in power dynamics)		
9. Respond poorly to boundaries		
10. Engage in DARVO (Deny, attack, and reverse victim and offender) and/or gas-light others		
11. Use others (monetarily, materially, emotionally, logistically, etc.)		
12. Appeal to others' emotions to influence their behavior (e.g., guilt trips; emotional blackmail)		
13. Triangulate others (attempt to pull other people into a conflict)		
14. Show possessiveness of people		
 Total		


Note: Severity levels that follow are largely arranged by the probability (or lack thereof) of an innocent explanation for the trait.

High Risk Warning Signs


Does this person....?	No (0)	Yes (1)
1. Engage in rescue seeking (say or imply that you are the one that can fix their problems)		
2. Tell sob stories (instead of engaging in developmentally appropriate sharing)		
3. Repeatedly bring up their hardships in inappropriate or unrelated situations		
4. Show a pattern of martyrdom / victimhood and/or describe self as having it worse than others		
5. Seem like their needs are a bottomless pit		
6. Suggest that others need to do something to make them happy, but that something seems to be a moving target		
7. Orient to others intrusively (e.g., pushy, invasive, nosy)		
8. Glom onto people (e.g., to function, feel secure, exert control, etc.)		
9. Fail to respect and protect others' autonomy		
10. Act uncomfortable or unnatural in response to your relationship with others		
11. Fail to read the room while wanting the room to read them		
12. Hijack entire groups with their emotions		
13. Create ploys or behave theatrically to turn attention to them		
14. Show exaggerated nonverbal behaviors with the expectation that others query them about it		
15. Behave provocatively in inappropriate situations and/or have a pattern of turning benign conversations sexual when not appropriate to the setting		
16. Seem prone to sulking or moodiness		
17. Show a general pattern of complaining, cynicism, and/or negativity		
18. Quickly name a villain when they are unhappy or uncomfortable		
19. Villainize and/or discard people who set boundaries and/or resist their control efforts		
20. Show chronic enviousness		
21. Seem that nothing is good enough / that they're never satisfied		
22. Engage in passive-aggressiveness		
23. Make you feel like you must tip toe around their emotions and/or beliefs		
24. Want to be perceived as the hero and/or show inconsistent, exaggerated hero behaviors		
25. Act like what they do for others is a big deal or required great sacrifice		
26. Overstate / exaggerate their contributions		
27. Tend to be especially critical of people who are more high-status or fortunate than them		

28. Treat information as power and try to control the flow of information		
29. Show self-absorption and/or self-importance		
30. Try to appeal to others' egos even when others aren't ego-motivated		
31. Get diminishing returns from others' praise, attention, etc.		
32. Show defensiveness and/or shift blame (externalize)		
33. Make jokes at others' expense		
34. Ignore, invalidate, or dispute others' feelings and/or trivialize others' concerns		
35. Take jabs that are hard to detect or describe in the moment		
36. Create more work and chaos for you		
37. Show patterns of inconsistent or contradictory behaviors or beliefs		
 Total		

Moderate Risk Warning Signs

Does this person....?	No (0)	Yes (1)
1. Fish for reassurance (e.g., through self-deprecation, expressions of insecurity, etc.)		
2. Have a pattern of big emotions, disproportionate reactions, and/or hypersensitivity		
3. Behave unpredictably		
4. Frequently engage in comparison		
5. Describe villains being in every setting they've been in and/or undermining them in every chapter of life		
6. Fail to maintain a stance of accountability		
7. Have superficial or impressionistic reactions to others' feelings		
8. Attempt to manufacture closeness		
9. Engage in love bombing (excessive attention, affection, gifts, etc. to reel someone in)		
10. Show a lack of meaningful and/or proportionate reciprocity		
11. Give with strings (i.e., expects something in return – to include tolerance of their toxicity)		
12. Disregard others' plans, desires, and circumstances to achieve their own will		
13. Categorize people in terms of good guy-bad guy		
14. Tend to be critical of others and/or create and spread narratives about others		
15. Have a pattern of telling others about themselves (e.g., "You're idealistic." a form of gaslighting)		
16. Engage in confusing or aberrant behavior with no reasonable explanation		
 Total		

Mild Risk Warning Signs

Does this person....?	No (0)	Yes (1)
1. Describe themselves as broken/damaged		
2. Appear helpless (e.g., to change their own outcome, improve their circumstances)		
3. Feel chronically misunderstood, overlooked, or left out		
4. Seem uncomfortable listening to others' hardships in group settings without sharing their own		
5. Have a pattern of interpersonal problems and/or voids of relationships across settings		
6. Have poor self-awareness and/or insight		
7. Tend to overemphasize their similarities to others (to reel someone in)		
8. Show a pattern of inconsistency		
9. Frequently leave you feeling confused		
10. Idealize others / put others on a pedestal		
11. Gossip		
12. Seem unmoved when you're in need		
13. Collect and/or tell you about groups of others who align with them (e.g., flying monkeys)		
14. Lack self-control in a subset of life domains		
 Total		