

# **HOW TO DEAL WITH TOXIC PEOPLE**

# THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE

## Wise People

Encounter truth and change as a result. For example, after getting a speeding ticket, wise people learn and slow down. After being told their words hurt someone, a wise person will try to understand why, apologize and work hard not to do it again. They're open, not defensive, they learn and grow and tend not to make the mistakes over and over again.

## Foolish People

Encounter truth and don't change. Instead, they try to adjust the truth so they don't have to adjust to it. Confronted with a problem, a foolish person will deny, blame, minimize, generate excuses and do anything in his or her power to avoid having to deal with reality.

## Evil People

They intend to harm you. They want to take you down. And as hard as it is to believe, they don't have your best interests at heart and want to see you fail. I found it hard to accept this early on in leadership, but I've seen it often enough times to no longer dismiss it.

**There are basically three kinds of people in the world: wise people, foolish people and evil people. The sooner you accept that, the easier it becomes to make progress.**

## 6 SIGNS YOU'RE DEALING WITH A TOXIC PERSON

### **They Come On To Strong**

People who come on strong when they first meet you usually leave just as loudly.

### **They Tell Rather Than Waiting To Be Asked**

Toxic people tell you everything about themselves. Healthy people wait to be asked.

### **You Hear From Them Far Too Often in the First Month**

Great leaders wait to be asked. They have the humility to be obscure for a while and to serve rather than to want to be served.

### **They Give You Advice During Your First Meeting**

Healthy people never give you loads of advice the first time they meet you. Unhealthy people do.

### **They Want To Be The Center of Attention**

They hijack conversations. They never ask questions. They want to get involved too soon.

### **They Have A Track Record of Moving Around**

If someone left 5 churches in the last 5 years, they're probably leaving yours too.


# HOW TO DEAL WITH TOXIC PEOPLE

## LEARN HOW TO SPOT THEM

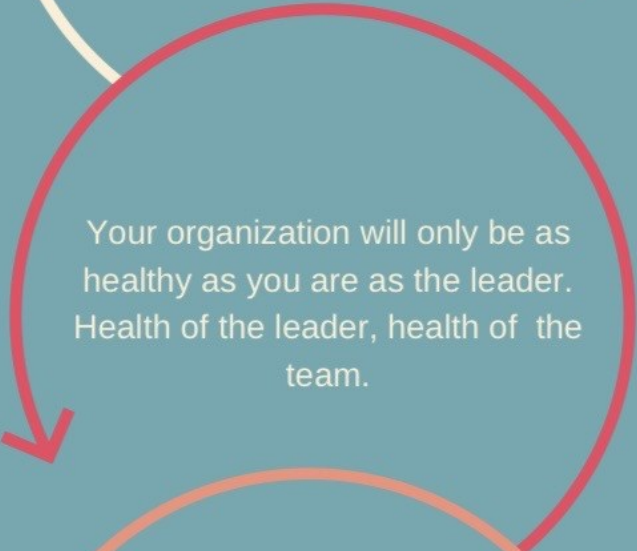
Behavior that's ultimately toxic to your organization's culture and mission include:

- Making the same mistakes over and over again, despite frequent attempts to help them and ample time to correct the problem and change.
- Self-absorption.
- Lying.
- Manipulation.
- An unwillingness to listen to feedback.
- Assigning blame.
- Refusing to accept responsibility.
- They're never wrong.
- Playing the victim. Frequent anger.
- Hidden agendas.
- A critical spirit about anything they didn't think of.
- Gossip or malicious talk about other people.
- Ignoring boundaries they or other people have set.
- Passive-aggressive behavior (what happens to your face and what happens behind your back are very different).
- Pursuing their own mission that's different from the organization's mission.

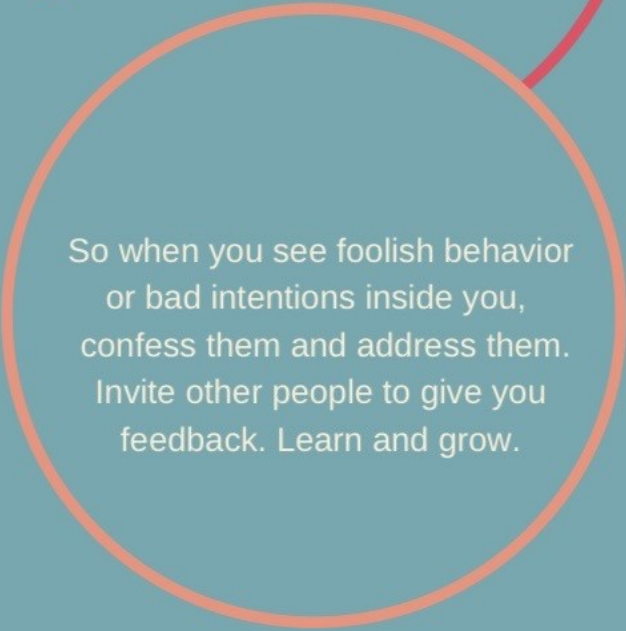
## TAKE A GOOD LOOK IN THE MIRROR



The first place to look for wisdom, foolishness, and evil in leadership is the least comfortable place to look: in the mirror.



Your organization will only be as healthy as you are as the leader. Health of the leader, health of the team.



So when you see foolish behavior or bad intentions inside you, confess them and address them. Invite other people to give you feedback. Learn and grow.



# LIMIT FOOLS

## What do you do with foolish people?

The problem with pouring your time and energy into foolish leaders is that after your coaching and help, they're no better and you're drained.

The key to fools is to limit the number and limit their impact. Otherwise, the cost is simply too great. Whether they mean to do damage or not, foolish people can do a lot of damage.

**It's hard  
to build  
the future  
on people  
who have  
trouble  
navigating  
the  
present.**


# ELIMINATE EVIL PEOPLE

## Get away and stay away.

While my faith tells me to love my enemies, there are some instances where a person is best prayed for from a distance, not from up close.

Imagine reaching 100—or 1000 or 10,000 new people—in the next year if your mission continues.

That's what people who want to harm you threaten. Taking the mission seriously means that, as a leader, you also have to take evil seriously. It's actually that important.



Create a deeply healthy culture and, over time, toxic people will leave.

**Why?** Because a healthy culture spits out toxic people. Just like healthy bodies ward off disease, healthy cultures ward off toxic people.

## STACK THE ORGANIZATION WITH WISE PEOPLE

### What do you do with foolish people?

The top is critical (by that I mean your senior leaders, board and other key players) with as many wise leaders as possible. Look for **honest, humble, growing leaders** who love to learn and are open for feedback.