



Thinking a little bit about today's video and rereading some notes about harmful relationships, I came to the conclusion that talking about "toxic love" implies a contradiction in terms, because when one is trapped in an unhealthy relationship under the guise of a "love without limits," one doesn't really realize that what he or she is living is rather an un-love. Let me explain.

True love is what Saint Paul describes in one of his letters to the Corinthians: "**Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.**" (1 Cor. 13:3-8). If we accept this brief list of characteristics as correct, then any type of romantic relationship that does not conform to this description could be classified as "not loving."

Unfortunately, many times the deep longing for companionship or feeling loved somehow makes us fall almost automatically into a toxic relationship. Instead of helping us to become better individuals and to grow in love, these attachments, little by little, draw us into hopelessness and pain. But, **how do we recognize when we're involved in an unhealthy relationship that will only bring bad things for us and for our loved ones?**

The limit is defined by integrity, dignity and personal happiness. Although a romantic relationship implies negotiating, conceding, and putting the other's well-being over my own, it doesn't mean it should always be one person who sacrifices his or her dreams and stability for the other. When is love gone from a relationship? In general, when we are not loved, when it truncates or compromises our personal fulfillment or when our values are violated. A "love" that demands an obstruction of one of the individuals' personal development is not love. Rather, it can be something closer to slavery.

How to get out of a toxic relationship?

Without a doubt, the first step is recognizing that we are involved in one and identifying

how we've gotten ourselves into this situation. Are we waiting for a miracle from heaven that turns the witch or the ogre across from us into the princess or prince of our dreams? If so, we are in an unhealthy relationship.

Although it might cost a great deal of energy and emotion to get out of this type of relationship, we have to clearly recognize and remember that it's hurting us and that what today causes us pain to extricate ourselves from, in the middle- and longer term will be the right decision. It's just like drugs: letting go is hard but it has to be done.

11 characteristics of a healthy (non-toxic) relationship

But, what about how to identify a healthy love? What do we have to hope for when we're about to get involved in a relationship? **Here are some guidelines:**

- Respect for the rights of both individuals
- Your differences are compatible
- Not confusing the "I" with selfishness
- Reciprocity
- Solidarity
- Promoting autonomy on both sides
- Promoting each one's personal, spiritual and professional development
- An empathetic love
- Using reason, not only sentiment
- Respecting each one's preferences or inclinations
- Distinguishing healthy worry for the other from an obsessive one

It's very important that we know how to build a healthy bond, based on respect and reciprocal giving, far from selfishness and mistreatment. Many times, after we "get used to" a toxic relationship, we take the irrevocable step of getting married, thinking that it will all get better after saying yes at the altar. There is nothing farther from the truth. A marriage requires, in order to grow solidly, that both husband and wife have many virtues. When these virtues are absent, the family's path ahead becomes a hard and complicated one. So it is during the earlier phase before giving your consent that one can realize whether the relationship has a good chance at a stable future. Let's not compromise our future happiness for a present weakness. We ought to be brave and stake our hopes on a love that's true, which is ultimately what we were created for and, therefore, what we all deserve.