



Psychological Detox

Words: Leilani Mitchell

Psychotherapist Leilani Mitchell explains how psychological toxins can be as poisonous to our wellbeing as chemical toxins.

The more we know about toxins and chemicals the more we realise the affect they have on our health. This is also true of what we call psychological toxins. These are the negative messages that we often use to blame, shame and condemn ourselves.

Depending on the people around you and the decisions you made when you were growing up, you may have supportive nurturing internal voices or you may have more destructive, 'toxic' voices. It is most likely that you will have some of both.

One way to assess this is to think about the things that you say to yourself. For example, if you have made a mistake or are going through a hard time, what do you say to yourself? Are your words supportive, encouraging and nurturing or are you more likely to be tough on yourself and tell yourself to 'get a grip', 'stop whinging' or 'pull yourself together'?

We can use these voices like tapes that we play in our head. Most parent's (or parental figures) do the best for their children. However, all parents get it wrong some of the time; some get it wrong a lot of the time. If you had a parent who could be shaming, cruel, harsh, abusive or blaming, you are more likely to have an internal toxic voices.

Imagine if you were to be critical toward another human being a large proportion of the time. What affect would that have on them? If you are critical of yourself it will also have an affect. You will undermine your own self-esteem and self-confidence. This can also have a physical affect on your health and wellbeing.

When we are judgmental of ourselves, it is painful and we have a physical response to that. It might be that we clench our stomach or shoulders, it might be that we feel sick or tighten our jaw. If we tense those muscles enough times it will have an affect on our physical health. Ulcers are a good example of this.

If you think that you have toxic voices don't worry. Although it feels as if we just automatically run those negative messages, we do have a choice. There is probably some underlying reason that we do this to ourselves, maybe when we were young the best way to survive our family of origin was to feel bad about ourselves. While a useful decision then, if it is a strategy we still use in adulthood, we are just in the habit of doing it. By being self-critical, we keep ourselves in that place of feeling bad about ourselves which can sometimes feel comfortable because it is so



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Aimed at those wishing to qualify as counsellors or UKCP registered psychotherapists, the courses combine Transactional Analysis theory with practical applications and demonstrations.

The Link Centre is currently interviewing for the October intake.

Introduction to Transactional Analysis (TA101), provides an overview of TA theory and is held over a weekend at dates throughout the year. The next courses take place on 7th/8th June and 6th/7th Sept.

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