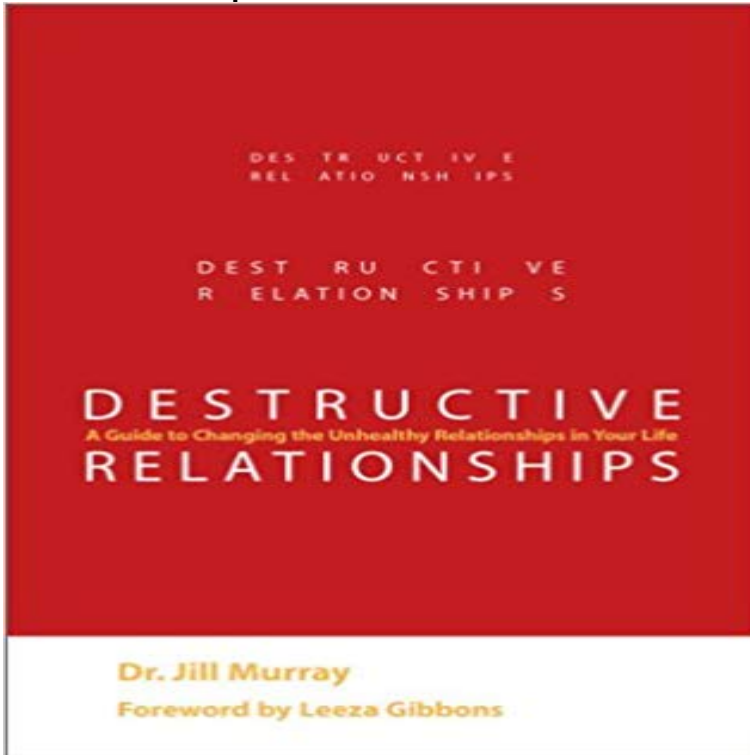


# Destructive Relationships: A Guide to Changing the Unhealthy Relationships in Your Life



Nearly all of us, at one time or another, have faced one of the following: A critical parent, an unkind spouse, unappreciative children, a demanding boss, back-stabbing coworkers, or gossipy friends. If these relationships have caused you to feel depressed, anxious, sick, hopeless, abandoned or emotionally depleted, then you may have been in a destructive relationship. Dr. Jill Murray, in her new book *DESTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS: A Guide To Changing The Unhealthy Relationships In Your Life* (Jodere, September 2002), says that destructive relationships are so common as to be the rule rather than the exception in many womens lives today. In fact, she claims that many women suffer from a whole host of toxic relationships. For example: Judy has a mother who makes little suggestions every time she visits: Judys house isnt clean enough, her children arent dressed warmly enough, she doesnt brown her chicken well enough, she isnt a good enough wife, andoh, by the waydid she gain a few pounds recently? Judy tries to ignore her mothers comments; shes used to them, having grown up with criticism all her life and besides, her mother is getting oldershe doesnt want to hurt her feelings. Judy also works for a boss who constantly demands more of her than anyone else in the department. She is often asked to work late, her reports arent quite up-to-snuff, and she doesnt take enough initiative. Judy rationalizes that her boss is a creative genius and like all geniuses, hes a bit eccentric. Judy has kids who treat her like a maid, taxi driver, and ATM but you know kids these daysthey all have an attitude; its just part of growing up. She also has girlfriends who betray the confidences she shares and a husband who often kids around with her by making caustic remarks about her appearance and libido. Does any of this sound familiar? So, how can you find new, healthier ways of being?

According to Dr. Jill the first step is to recognize the signs of a destructive relationship. They can be verbally abusive, which may include name-calling, critical comments, threats, or lies. They may be emotionally abusive, which include such behaviors as humiliation in public or private; demeaning one in order to make them feel small and weak or less than; being jealous, possessive, or controlling; intimidation; demanding to know where one is at all times or using interrogation techniques; blaming someone else for difficulties or disappointments; being a user. Sexually abusive behaviors include sexual harassment or discrimination (on the job, for example); sexual coercion or assault; or being sexually demanding. Physical abuse involves such behaviors as pushing, striking, choking, restraining, or not letting one leave a room. The next step in ridding yourself of destructive relationships is to figure out what brought you to them and why you remain. Dr. Jill believes that people act the way they do because they get a payoff for their behavior. Before you extricate yourself from a destructive relationship, you must decide if the cost is dearer than the payoff you have received. These relationships often cost you your self-respect, your happiness, your integrity, your sense of gratitude, and your spirit. Learning to stand up for yourself is a critical part of creating healthy relationships. In her book *Destructive Relationships*, Dr. Jill provides strategies to:

- \*\*overcome the need to people-please
- \*\*uproot poor self-esteem and reclaim your power
- \*\*identify your fears and banish them through positive steps
- \*\*let go of shame and guilt, thereby eliminating the need to keep secrets
- \*\*establish boundaries
- \*\*free yourself from no-win coping behaviors such as denial, minimizing, shopping, overeating, compulsive sex, drug or alcohol use.

The point is to realize that you deserve to be happy and to set and maintain boundaries wi

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