

# Detox

Toxins are poisons that build up in our system over time. It has become common in our culture for individuals concerned with their physical health to do a “detox,” a process of cleansing the body from the build up, giving the liver and the other organs that collect toxins a fresh start. In our society, we also call the process that someone goes through as they seek to overcome a substance addiction “detox.” Those detox processes can be quite severe and often require medical oversight as the patient’s body reacts to the withdrawal of the substance on which it has become dependent. In either case, the need to remove the toxins so that the body and mind can function as they ought is the key.

As introverted leaders in an extroverted culture, we experience invalidation from without and within. Introverts are naturally hard on themselves and frequently suffer from feelings of inadequacy on different levels. Add to that internal sense of deficiency, the extroverted ideal of leadership so prevalent in most of our work environments, and you’ve got a pretty toxic combination. These two merge to create a sense, often vague, of “not measuring up, not having what it takes,” or “something’s wrong with me.” In a word these all describe aspects of shame. Shame is the most powerful force in the universe (despite perhaps love). It can be debilitating, like a straight-jacket that makes us feel irrelevant or insignificant, hindering our confidence and performance at work. Shame whispers, “There is something wrong with you.”

Many of us, in our society, are walking around with high levels of toxins in our system, yet we are essentially unaware of this hidden cause of our energy depletion and overall sense of ill-feeling. As it is physically, so it is cognitively, emotionally and professionally. Many introverted leaders are

walking around with fairly high levels of toxins that have been deposited from within and without. What would the benefit be to our well-being, our job performance, our connection with others on the team, to have this cloud around us, these toxins within, cleansed? This is a key aspect of the coaching process I pursue with yin leaders.