



POETS 2020 - 2021

Grow Healthy Relationships in your Club Expert Antidotes

All 3 topics of our training **Session 2: Open the yellow door to club growth** is a lot more personal and relevant to clubs.

To **grow** clubs is more than just growing in membership numbers. It is about growing as members; growing the careers of your young members; forming lasting friendships; giving hope through projects; putting smiles on the less privileged faces; making a difference - making your club **irresistible**.

The **core idea for growing** is to get all your members to think strategically about what they need to do to make their clubs **more attractive** to members.

Ask yourself this question? *What makes me stay a member of my club?* PAUSE:

The answer is highly likely to be your **connections** in your club.

Do you know that **relationships** are defined as "*the way in which two or more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected.*"

Now ask yourself another question? *What will make me leave my club?*

PAUSE:

It's actually a no-brainer: when you **feel** disconnected –separate or detached from your club. **It's about how your club makes you feel!**

And that has a lot to do with your club's style or environment. It can be **healthy** and energise you OR it can be **toxic** and kill you.

SLIDE 1

SO....Can you cure a toxic club environment?

Toxic environments in a club is a complex issue. In many ways, it's also unique to the individuals experiencing it. (**remember I said it is how you feel**). There is not a silver bullet solution, and that's one of the key reasons it's such a challenge to solve.

And **YES!**

It does exist in **Rotary** clubs. It will come and go over time, but it is very dependent on how you as the leaders manage your clubs.

And it is a deadly serious issue. That's why District put together a **facilitation team** starting in our 2020-21 year to support and guide you. You will hear more about this team shortly.

To be absolutely clear though: **there is no single cure.**

But there are many antidotes to assist you and your club. I chose 10 of many ways that both leaders and members can use to help cure toxicity in their clubs.

Antidote 1. Acknowledgement

Many clubs wait too long to solve the hostility because they simply cannot believe it's happening in their club.

Acknowledge that a problem exists is the first and most important step towards curing a toxic environment. Many clubs wait too long

Antidote 2. Action

Positive actions are a cure – and District has started a support facilitation team to help you.

Negative actions are often the source of hostility in a club environment. It is not enough to acknowledge that a workplace is toxic—curing it requires **action**.

Sadly, most people don't want to act. They just hope things will magically change or get better. Your club will **not** get healthy if you do not take action.

Antidote 3. Communication

Toxic communications reflects 'an evil version of the game Telephone' resulting in twisted information.

Communication is the key to expressing ourselves and understanding others. Without good communication, it is impossible to tackle issues as large and complicated as hostility in your club. If you're not able to communicate *effectively*, any actions you take will be hamstrung from the start.

Toxic communications are described in many ways, but "***an evil version of the game Telephone***" is to me the best. Someone might say one thing to someone who isn't listening at all, or sometimes worse, is listening through a selective filter. The information, or the *intent* behind a comment gets twisted each time it hits another filter until it's virtually unrecognizable to the person who said it.

Although it may seem basic, communication is something that many clubs fail to master. **Listening skills are needed for good communication. Listening skills are exactly that:** the skill to listen and to understand. There is a great '*game*' I would like to recommend to you to play in your club at one of your meetings. Its about recognising the different ways of listening by different people – in color. Find it on TED TALKS or contact me later.

Antidote 4. Fairness

Because fairness can be so subjective, it can help to continually think about fairness, and how it fits into decisions that impact your members

This antidote is known to all of us as Rotarians. Why? Because it is the 1st question of our 4-way test: ***Is it fair?***

Clubs with leaders that do not give recognition and who show disrespect towards their own members are nearly always top contenders for a toxic award. Of course the concept of fairness can be subjective at times, but whatever the reason, **never** be unfair to the member involved.

Sometimes these unfair ways sneak their way into clubs and if that happens little-by-little, it can be hard to notice. Then it becomes the style and conduct of the club – and it creates a toxic way of addressing any club issue. That is why it's important to think continually about fairness, and how it fits into decisions that impact your members.

Antidote 5. Fun

Clubs do not have to be all fun all the time, but a small dose of fun can have a dramatic impact on the tone and climate of your club.

Clubs need to be fun to be with. There are different types of fun that appeal to different people, and it's important to keep that in mind. Easy fun injections are for example to host fun events like theme days. Why not bring Rotary theme month into your clubs? If you need some inspiration, check out what your fellow Rotarians over the world are doing – or create totally new ideas this year to get your spark back.

Antidote 6. Flexibility

Flexibility creates healthy clubs

You will hear a lot about flexibility in Rotary during the upcoming year. It's important to understand the **impact** your own appetite for flexibility and willingness to entertain alternative views can have on your club. A "*we always did it this way*" approach isn't going to win any hearts or minds of both your existing and new members.

Antidote 7. Socialization

Socialization is a highly effective defense against a toxic environment.

Socialization and a sense of belonging within a group are some of the most fundamental needs human beings exhibit. They sit just above physiological needs and personal safety on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Think back on my 2 questions at the beginning: **TO be connected – is TO belong**

Antidote 8. Recognition

Recognition is one of my 10 most effective ways to combat a toxic environment.

Regular recognition works to eliminate multiple toxic elements by helping to ensure that **everyone's** contributions are given the appreciation they deserve.

Why not recognise the club secretary who, quietly in the background, ensures that your club members stay informed and meetings and events run smoothly. This will give the message to your club members that they are appreciated.

Antidote 9. Self-reflection

Sometimes the most effective antidote to a toxic environment is to take a look in the mirror.

Why is it so important to reflect?

Feeling hostile is an emotion that can be triggered with little awareness. **We** can actually be the ones who feel hostile towards the one **we** feel is at fault. Be aware of your emotions. This is **not** touchy-feely stuff, as **emotions drive behavior**.

You are the club **leaders**. Your behavior will influence your club. Just remove the '**e**' from the front of emotion and you have the key word: **motion**.

You will be required to act. **Remember ACTION as Antidote 2?** I urge you to enhance your emotional vocabulary and check in with yourself often to determine how you are feeling. When you are attuned to how you feel only then can you make the right choices on how you act. ***Catch your emotions before they catch you...and if you do encounter hostility, do not let it automatically trigger retribution.***

Antidote 10. Strategy

Remember the core idea of growing a club is to think strategically?

Biggest challenge: to shift from complaining to strategy

You heard our incoming DG Carl-Heinz telling you how important the strategic plan of clubs are for healthy clubs. To have a solid strategy is very important when faced with a challenging, or toxic environment:

This may sound terrible to say, but it **does** happen in many Rotary clubs. Members that **verbally** thrash that drama queen club member or that overbearing Board member. They may feel good afterwards, but it does nothing to improve matters.

So instead of focusing on others' personalities, you as leaders need to figure out how to influence the situation. This usually involves changing members' perspectives, their behaviors, or both.

On the other hand, if a member is **truly** the reason for a toxic club environment, and you have **exhausted** all avenues to an amicable solution (including the **Facilitation team**), then you have to start figuring out how he or she can leave **without hurting Rotary or the member**. There are very specific and clear processes in Rotary to follow. As Presidents you have to follow due process.

In conclusion

The causes of toxicity and hostility in clubs are myriad, but the antidotes are equally plentiful.

Although this is a large list, it's really just a jumping off point. Even if you or your club don't find the exact solution you're looking for here, there's a good chance one of these tips can help you work **towards** a solution, or at the very least provide some inspiration towards finding one.

May your year as leaders create growing and healthy clubs. I thank you.

(Adapted from the writings of George Dickson - based on a work environment)