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Toxicity

As people, we often consider the significance of the word impact. The concept of the word to some may be as simple as cause and effect to others, it could mean the world. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Toni Morrison once said, “If you want to fly, you have to give up the things that weigh you down.” The impact of the words by Morrison were clear as day, they were moving. If everyone thought of a time they were cut down or discouraged whether it was by their own selves or others, most would recall the cause, but not the effect. For most, discouragement is the end of getting that job, writing that book, or becoming the best in your league. However, there is a way to achieve your goals and face your fears as Morrison said, you must *give up what weighs you down*.

Toxicity. We often think of things that are toxic like chemicals and food that’s gone bad. But what makes something toxic isn’t necessarily the food or the chemical but the harm it does when you’re exposed to it. When you are made vulnerable to toxic elements it consumes your lungs, fills your mind with irrational thoughts, and eventually can stop your heart. The thing about the word toxic is that it doesn’t always mean chemicals and spoiled food. I became very

familiar with toxicity when I was 14. I realized then that the thing that kept me happy for so long stopped. I was two years old when I stepped foot into my first dance class. To me, it was like magic, the movement, the music, the costumes, and the lights. It was what I spent the next 12 years doing for hours upon hours a week. It was always hard to pinpoint where my tears came from after a class, where the words of inspiration turned to words that drained. Looking in a mirror there stood a starving little girl because fitting into a costume that I wore when I was six was more important than eating a meal. When I was pushed not to be better but to be someone else, being told that I would be nothing because I would never be skilled enough or be thin enough. Standing emotionless being told you must give everything and at the end of the day, you'd still be nothing. To me, dance became a game; a game I knew that I would never win. I would never be able to win because walking into that studio and standing there always made me the underdog. When the thing that is supposed to make you happier doesn't and it takes from your buck you have a choice. I had the choice to let the toxicity fill my lungs and invade my thoughts or the choice to shut the door and walk away. Walking away isn't easy, it's not easy leaving everything you always knew and always had. But it's not courage or fear, it's courage and fear. And you take that fear and you walk right over it because courage will always win. I learned from that day, that last performance. I learned that I will always be my own biggest fan, and that's okay. Things change, people change, feelings change and that's okay. Life is beautiful, there is more to it and I knew that. I wanted more; I knew I was worthy of more. So I gave up and let go of what held me down. I took what I had left, and I built my own wings, and I flew.

It wasn't easy, there are times I feel as if I made the wrong choice, but choosing yourself is never the wrong choice. Choosing happiness and letting history stay history because what you allow will always continue. Toni Morrison once said, "If you want to fly, you have to give up the

things that weigh you down.” Morrison's words stay strong and hold infinite value because in every case they win. I will forever choose to fly, I will forever keep Morrison's words close. To everyone who has ever felt the fear of toxicity weigh you down, take that courage and let it build your wings and fly.