

Dealing with the Destructors

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I have thought a lot about whether to write this column or not. I wrote it anyway, because I needed to write my thoughts down. Then I deliberated about publishing it. I wanted to publish this article to expose a certain type of person that is very destructive to our communities and our society. They need to be exposed so they can't cause more damage. Yet, I also worried that this expose could also serve as a "how-to" playbook for those who want to become what I have termed - **the Destructors**. Since you are reading this, you know that I opted to expose them.

Nothing flourishes unless it has the proper habitat to support it. A community that is deeply divided is the right environment for Destructors to survive and thrive. **Division** is what feeds their souls and gives them power. They need an opposition. They need one group of people to be angry and opposed to another group of people. They fire up their angry followers, and suddenly there is a parade of rage, and they are in front, acting as the leader.

Of course, sometimes the rage starts to die down when the issue gets boring or resolved, and then people go back to their normal lives. That is when the Destructors step up and fan the flames by creating a greater level of distrust. They rise at meetings, or in front of podiums, or at community events, and start throwing around all sorts of half-truths and outright lies about a situation or about a group of people, to create a heightened level of **Distrust** of those other people. They often use social media to "spread the word", and start sentences with, "You know, they say...", but they never actually identify who "they" are. Once a Destructor gives folks a renewed sense of distrust of the enemy, they have no choice but to trust, and continue to follow, the Destructor.

Sometimes those half-truths and outright lies can begin to catch up with the Destructors. You can only lie for so long about others before your lies start to catch up with you. The Destructors, however, know that will happen, and have a plan. When their lies are outright exposed, they simply go into **Denial**. They will deny they ever said the lie, deny the lie is a lie, deny...deny..deny. They do it so well that if you once supported the Destructor, you will even question yourself. Perhaps you heard them wrong? Perhaps that wasn't what they meant? The process is called "gaslighting" (look it up) and is common in abusive relationships. And it works.

Once that doesn't work anymore, the Destructors will bring out the big guns and use the tactic of **Distraction** to hang onto what power and influence they have. They will literally try to fake you out by changing the subject, throwing out red herrings, or throwing up straw dogs to distract everyone from the real issue. Their goal is to avoid the truth and keep people angry, but they need to keep their people angry at someone else to be effective. Just when you think you have them in a corner and they are about to be exposed, be careful. They will change the subject, change the mood, and change the room so that you are the one on the defensive.

Finally, if they are truly exposed once and for all, and they have no power left, they will simply **Discard** everything and move on. They will abandon their issue, their cause, their supporters, and perhaps even the community, and simply move on to the next issue and perhaps even the next community. The reason they do this is because they were never about any of that-the issue or the community. They were about acquiring destructive power. That is all they crave, and they use the 5 Os-Division, Distrust,

Denial, Distraction, and Discard-to grow and keep their power as a **Destructor**. Watch for them, and be prepared for the tricks they will use. The future of your community depends on it.

These folks are hard to find before they become powerful and influential. They are like an aggressive disease that goes without symptoms, and therefore unnoticed until suddenly it's almost too late. When they arise, you have little time to lose, but you must be smart and strategic about dealing with them. They often win for a little while, but they never win for long. They can be beaten, and then your community can return to focusing on working on what really makes it great again. Stay positive, focused, on message, and consistent.

This syndicated content is provided by Doug Griffiths, best-selling author and chief community builder at 13 Ways, a company with a mission to push communities to face their challenges to find their unique path to success. For more information visit www.13ways.ca, or we can start the conversation at info@13ways.ca.