

THE TOXIC 10

ASSESSMENT

Identify the pattern most likely to be slowing your momentum

Joseph McClendon III · Neuroencoding Institute

8 QUESTIONS · 4 PATTERNS · ONE CLEARER NEXT STEP

How to Take the Assessment

For each question, choose the answer that feels most true for you right now. Do not overthink it. Your first honest response is usually the most useful.

SCORING IS SIMPLE

Each answer is labeled A, B, C, or D. When you finish all eight questions, count how many times you selected each letter. Your most frequent letter reveals your dominant result pattern, along with the Toxic 10 behaviors, fears, and responses most closely connected to it.

Q1 — When you have an important task in front of you, what is most likely to get in your way?

A

I put it off, overthink where to start, or get distracted by less important things.

B

I question whether I'm capable of doing it as well as I should.

C

I make progress, but tend to hesitate or pull back when the stakes get bigger.

D

I know what needs to be done, but I often don't have the energy or mental bandwidth for it.

Q2 — When a significant opportunity shows up, what's most likely to happen internally?

A

I hesitate, overthink it, or take too long to act.

B

I wonder, "Do I really have what it takes to deliver?"

C

I get excited, but part of me becomes uncomfortable with what could happen if I actually succeed.

D

I immediately think about everything already on my plate and whether I have the capacity for more.

Q3 – Which thought sounds most like your inner dialogue when you're under pressure?

A

"I'll deal with it later when I have more time or clarity."

B

"I'm not sure I'm good enough for this."

C

"What if getting what I want changes things in ways I'm not ready for?"

D

"I don't know how much longer I can keep operating like this."

Q4 – When you think about reaching your next level of success, what feels like the biggest obstacle?

A

Consistently doing what I know I need to do.

B

Fully believing I'm capable and deserving of being there.

C

Breaking through a level I seem to approach but never quite move beyond.

D

Having the energy and capacity to sustain another level of success.

Q5 — When you're in a room with people you want to impress, what's most likely to happen?

A

I hold back from taking action, initiating conversations, or following up afterward.

B

I compare myself to others and wonder whether I truly belong there.

C

I can show up confidently, but becoming more visible or successful can make me unexpectedly uncomfortable.

D

I can perform well, but it often takes more energy out of me than anyone realizes.

Q6 — When you think about asking for what you really want, what most often stops you?

A

I wait for the “right” moment and sometimes never make the ask.

B

I worry about rejection, judgment, or whether I have the right to ask.

C

I hesitate when the ask could actually create a major change or opportunity for me.

D

I'm already carrying so much that pursuing something else can feel exhausting.

Q7 — Which description best captures what happens when you're making progress toward an important goal?

A

I struggle to maintain momentum and can fall into cycles of stopping and restarting.

B

The closer I get, the more I question whether I'm actually ready or qualified.

C

I often get remarkably close, then something seems to derail the momentum.

D

I can keep pushing forward, but eventually my energy, focus, or resilience begins to suffer.

Q8 — Complete this sentence: "The real reason I haven't yet achieved everything I know I'm capable of is..."

A

"...I don't consistently take action on what I already know I need to do."

B

"...part of me still questions whether I'm truly capable or worthy of it."

C

"...I keep getting close to the next level and somehow getting in my own way."

D

"...I've spent so much time pushing that I don't always have the energy or capacity to go further."

Find Your Result

Count the number of A, B, C, and D answers you selected. Your most frequent letter identifies the dominant pattern showing up in your answers.

Letter	Result	Primary Patterns
A	The Procrastinator	Procrastination + Hesitation
B	The Doubter	Self-Doubt, Imposter Syndrome, Fear of Rejection, Self-Loathing
C	The Ceiling Hitter	Fear of Success + Fear of Failure
D	The Depleted Achiever	Stress + Overwhelm

IF YOU HAVE A TIE

If you have a tie, two patterns may be working together. Read both result profiles and notice which one feels most familiar in your day-to-day life.

Your result is a pattern, not a box. For clarity, each of the Toxic 10 is assigned to one primary result type. Your result highlights the specific behaviors, fears, thoughts, and emotional responses most closely connected to that dominant pattern.

The goal is not simply to name the pattern. It is to begin noticing what may be operating underneath it.

A - THE PROCRASTINATOR

Toxic 10 patterns: Procrastination + Hesitation

Procrastination is often the visible behavior, but it may be fueled by hesitation, overwhelm, or fear of failure underneath. You may know exactly what needs to be done and still find yourself planning, researching, getting distracted, or waiting until you feel more ready. These Toxic 10 patterns can reinforce one another: overwhelm makes action feel harder, hesitation creates delay, fear of failure raises the stakes, and procrastination provides temporary relief.

How this pattern may show up

- You know what matters, but less important tasks take over first.
- You spend more time preparing, researching, or organizing than executing.
- You start with good intentions but struggle to maintain momentum.
- At the end of the day, guilt or frustration can replace the action you intended to take.

What may be happening underneath

- Procrastination can function like a protective response when action has become associated with failure, judgment, uncertainty, or loss.
- The conscious mind may know exactly what to do while an automatic response underneath keeps creating distance from the task.
- More willpower is not always the answer. If the same pattern keeps returning, the issue may be the default response rather than a lack of knowledge.

What to pay attention to

- Notice what kinds of tasks trigger the strongest urge to delay.
- Pay attention to the thought, feeling, or physical sensation that shows up right before you redirect your attention.
- Look for recurring moments when “I know what to do” is followed by “but I’m still not doing it.”

Reflection question

What important action have you been postponing even though you already know what to do? What tends to happen internally right before you avoid it?

B - THE DOUBTER

Toxic 10 patterns: Self-Doubt, Imposter Syndrome, Fear of Rejection, Self-Loathing

The Doubter pattern tends to turn uncertainty inward. Self-doubt can tell you that you are not ready. Imposter syndrome can make your accomplishments feel less legitimate than they are. Fear of rejection or failure can make being seen, asking, speaking up, or taking a risk feel unusually threatening. When those patterns intensify, the inner dialogue can shift from questioning what you do to criticizing who you are.

How this pattern may show up

- You question whether you are ready, qualified, or deserving even when there is evidence that you are capable.
- You compare yourself to others and assume they are more confident or prepared than you are.
- Visibility, recognition, or high-stakes opportunities can trigger a stronger inner critic.
- Success does not always quiet the doubt. Sometimes it gives the doubt a bigger stage.

What may be happening underneath

- Self-doubt can develop from experiences where being seen, trying fully, or taking a risk was associated with criticism, rejection, humiliation, or disappointment.
- A protective response that formed around one experience can begin firing across many unrelated situations.
- The voice saying “Who do you think you are?” may feel convincing without being an accurate measurement of your ability.

What to pay attention to

- Notice when doubt gets louder: before visibility, after praise, during comparison, or when the stakes rise.
- Separate evidence from interpretation. What have you actually accomplished versus what does the inner voice say about those accomplishments?
- Watch for ways you make yourself smaller, delay opportunities, or over-prepare in order to feel “ready enough.”

Reflection question

Where in your life are you already capable, but still waiting to feel more confident before you fully show up?

C - THE CEILING HITTER

Toxic 10 patterns: Fear of Success + Fear of Failure

The Ceiling Hitter often has no problem creating momentum. The pattern becomes most visible when something meaningful is actually within reach. Fear of success may create discomfort around visibility, responsibility, money, change, or shifting relationships. Fear of failure can add another layer of pressure, while hesitation and self-doubt show up right at the threshold. The result can be a repeated cycle of getting close, pulling back, regrouping, and trying again.

How this pattern may show up

- You make strong progress and then unexpectedly stall near a breakthrough.
- An opportunity looks exciting until it becomes real, visible, or irreversible.
- You can identify logical reasons for pulling back, but in hindsight the timing seems suspiciously consistent.
- You may repeatedly reach a similar income, visibility, relationship, or performance threshold.

What may be happening underneath

- The brain can associate greater success with perceived costs such as losing relationships, changing identity, increased responsibility, greater scrutiny, or losing the safety of the familiar.
- The protective response may appear as caution rather than fear, which makes the pattern difficult to recognize.
- A ceiling can be less about capability and more about an old conclusion about what success would mean.

What to pay attention to

- Look for the point where excitement changes into hesitation.
- Notice whether the same type of derailment appears whenever you approach a specific threshold.
- Ask what you imagine you could lose, have to become, or be responsible for if you actually reached the next level.

Reflection question

If you completely achieved the next level you say you want, what would change? What part of that change feels uncomfortable, costly, or unsafe?

D - THE DEPLETED ACHIEVER

Toxic 10 patterns: Stress + Overwhelm

The Depleted Achiever is often very good at continuing to perform despite what is happening internally. Stress and overwhelm are usually the clearest Toxic 10 patterns here, but as depletion grows, procrastination and self-doubt can appear too. Tasks that once felt easy may get postponed, decisions can become harder, and lower energy can be misread as a discipline or capability problem. Sometimes procrastination is a capacity problem, not an action problem.

How this pattern may show up

- You can continue performing even when you feel exhausted.
- Your energy may be strong at certain times and crash at others.
- Sleep, focus, patience, motivation, or recovery do not feel as reliable as they once did.
- You may feel as though you are managing your life efficiently without fully experiencing or enjoying it.

What may be happening underneath

- Sustained pressure can keep the body in a prolonged stress response, especially when demands feel constant or unpredictable.
- Over time, insufficient recovery can affect cognitive sharpness, emotional regulation, sleep quality, motivation, and physical resilience.
- High performers can normalize depletion because continuing to produce is often rewarded, even when the internal system is asking for recovery.

What to pay attention to

- Notice whether rest actually restores you or simply allows you to keep going.
- Pay attention to where performance is being maintained through force rather than genuine energy.
- Look at the relationship between your workload, recovery, sleep, emotional bandwidth, and ability to be present.

Reflection question

Where are you continuing to perform at a high level while quietly paying for it with your energy, focus, health, or presence?