

A New Book Names the 79 “Toxic Tactics” Reshaping How We Talk to Each Other

Toxic Tactics: 79 Patterns of Abusive Language That Have Become Normalized in Our Culture, by Dr. Elana Sztokman (Lioness Books), arrives October 13, 2026.

We are living in a time when lying, gaslighting, shaming, and silencing have become so ordinary that we barely notice them. In *Toxic Tactics*, award-winning feminist anthropologist Dr. Elana Sztokman names 79 of these patterns of abusive language and organizes them into seven recognizable families: lying; bullying, shaming, and isolating; turbo spin; crazy-making; silencing; hate, racism, and violence; and sexism and misogyny.

Drawing on decades of studying how words build power, Sztokman shows how the abuse we once thought of as private, the language of the controlling partner behind closed doors, has become the language of politics, media, and public life. Each tactic is defined in plain terms, illustrated with real examples, and paired with tools for recognizing and defusing it. The premise is simple, and hopeful: once you can name a tactic, it loses its power over you.



“This book is a wonderful antidote to the last few years’ stunning decline in public discourse. Elana Sztokman brilliantly identifies and explains dozens of ‘toxic’ rhetorical tactics, a vital effort since, as she writes, naming the tactics restores clarity.”

— Prof. Susan Benesch, Founding Director, the Dangerous Speech Project (Berkman Klein Center, Harvard)

“A breath of fresh air in a toxic atmosphere... Her analysis provides a huge boost of clarity to help the rest of us fight back.”

— Lundy Bancroft, author of *Why Does He Do That?*

“A deeply reported, urgently relevant book... both a field guide and a vocabulary for recognizing toxic rhetoric.”

— Marjorie Ingall, co-author of *Sorry, Sorry, Sorry*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Elana Sztokman is an award-winning Jewish feminist anthropologist, author, educator, and activist, and a two-time winner of the National Jewish Book Award. *Toxic Tactics* is her eighth book. She writes the Substack *The Roar*, co-hosts the peace podcast *Women Ending War*, and speaks and consults around the world on issues of language, culture, gender, and social change.



BOOK DETAILS

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