According to Dr. Davenport, toxicity in older adults manifests itself in negative behaviors and attitudes that can adversely impact interactions with health professionals, caregivers, and family members. Davenport presents theories and case examples to help us understand this phenomenon and provides useful techniques for caring for toxic elders.

Experienced caregivers will immediately recognize Gloria Davenport’s descriptions of the "toxic" personality: elders who persistently poison their own care environment with noncompliant and psychologically abusive behavior. Toxic older adults are often hazardous cases for gerontology professionals: they can destroy care relationships, and even produce co-victimization in their caregivers.

Davenport presents ways that care providers can prevent difficult elders from manipulating the caregivers' energy and interfering with effective practice, relationships, and healing.