

Five Minutes to Thrive: 13-17 May 19

De-Toxifying the Workplace

Chances are, you have some experience with a “toxic” work environment (if not, put yourself in the shoes of “Milton” from a 1999 infamous office-based comedy). Toxicity at work isn’t just feeling dissatisfied with your boss, your work, or your place in the organization; rather, it describes a pervasive, dysfunctional culture at multiple levels which breeds resentment, cynicism, and a general sense of mistrust. People in toxic environments report higher stress-based illnesses, miss more workdays, report poor relationships with coworkers, and quit as soon as they can.



While organizational culture is most significantly influenced from the top-down, *everyone* has the ability to make a delible impact on what is considered acceptable or normative behavior in the workplace. The book *Rising Above a Toxic Workplace: Taking Care of Yourself in an Unhealthy Environment* offers a number of suggestions for how we can all contribute to the creation of a thriving workplace.

If the <i>Problem</i> is:	Then <i>Leadership</i> should:	But <i>Everyone</i> can:
Hidden agendas, lies/deceit, indirect lines of communication	Communicate genuinely, directly, and with transparency	Say what you mean, be <i>real</i> and assertive (but still respectful)
Aggression, bullying, or disrespectful behavior	Set clear standards for behavior and consistently punish infractions	Forgive and let go of past hurts, be assertive, and avoid a competitive spirit
Gossiping, blaming	Foster emotional intelligence, demonstrate integrity and respect	Accept responsibility for choices and consequences
(Perception of) favoritism	Treat all Airmen by the same rules	Treat everyone with fairness & respect
Poor work/life balance	Develop policies that support comprehensive health	Prioritize your mental, emotional, and physical health; affirm your values
Unclear or unrealistic expectations	Prioritize, assign realistic workloads and deadlines, ask for feedback	Ask for clarification, create your own agenda
Morally questionable behavior or inappropriate relationships	Set clear standards for behavior and consistently punish infractions	Maintain appropriate boundaries and professionalism, demonstrate integrity
Strained interaction between Airmen and leaders	Listen to Airmen and be open to constructive feedback	Be willing to disagree or give honest feedback w/o making it personal
Mistrust and cynicism	Acknowledge work well done, regularly express appreciation	Acknowledge work well done, regularly express appreciation

I genuinely believe that nobody wants to play a role in fostering an unhealthy work environment; however, I also believe that many people are sensitive to negative feedback and may not want to expose themselves to critique. But unmasking organizational/cultural issues, uncomfortable as it may be, is often the only way to fix them...and this also means taking a good look at our own actions, first.

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