

How to Keep Your Sanity – When Your Workplace Is Toxic

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It's a difficult time to be an employee at an American company. Terrorism, war, corporate corruption and extensive layoffs have instilled an atmosphere of workplace anxiety that may be unrivaled in our history.

For the employee caught in the crossfire, there's another problem. Because of the poor economy, you can't simply pack up and leave. Jobs are precious so, if you want to keep paying the mortgage and the utilities, you're all but forced to stay with your job. It's a rough situation for millions of people.

In my book, [The Tragedy in the Workplace](#), I describe the modern workplace as a scene of fear, mistrust, high drama and rampant egotism. The average worker is insecure and uneasy right now. People are fearful of being laid off, they're anxious about traveling, they're worried about the economy and world issues. And rather than responding in a humane fashion, business leaders often continue to make decisions that only benefit those at the top. The result – the fears grow, workplace tension increases to a level of toxicity, some businesses collapse from within and the reactions and counter-reactions escalate.

Fortunately, employees are not powerless to change the course of their company and to help create a sane workplace. Every person in the workplace is accountable. No matter what your level, you can play a role in changing the corporate culture by taking responsibility for your own actions, and not simply playing a part in the toxic culture.

By recognizing the source of office gossip, cliques, power struggles and ego battles, you can reclaim your authentic power and disengage from the drama. You'll then have the moral ground and confidence to take a stand for cooperation and teamwork. You'll soon find that people will listen and respect your viewpoint.

Here are some steps for restoring your personal power and integrity:

1. Don't hold others responsible for your feelings, actions and circumstances.

Blaming others is the number one strategy of the ego in the workplace. However, when you blame someone else you are giving up your own power. You are saying that you are a victim. You also back the other person in the corner and increase the chances they will return the attack.

2. Be willing to look at your part in the drama.

Enron, WorldCom, and other corporate collapses did not occur because of a few people at the top. It took a whole cast of characters. Do you compromise your values

in order to please someone else? Do you find yourself participating in gossip? Do you align with special interest groups or cliques to find some sense of security? Practice aligning with your inner guidance and choosing the high road even when it is fearful.

3. Don't compare yourself with others.

Envy or a sense of superiority will occur when you start judging and comparing yourself with others. Both are untrue. We are all equal in spirit and unique in our own talents and attributes. Work on reaching your own potential and being true to your own goals. Give up envy, competition, sabotage and, instead, trust that your integrity and personal character will stand in the long run.

4. Don't seek personal glory and approval from others.

Let your work speak for itself. If you are trying to impress others and seeking attention, it will actually limit your abilities. When you are concerned or feel pressure about your performance, you inhibit your natural expression. People who are self-expressive are liberated and open. They rise to higher levels because of their freedom to be themselves.

5. Don't deny or repress your feelings and emotions, but face your own inner fears.

Fear and other negative feelings are actually messengers from your soul showing you where you need healing. When you feel intimidated by someone, ask yourself, what is the threat? When you look within, you will see that the fear is in you and that the other person is simply a mirror, showing you your weaknesses. By facing yourself you will become stronger and you will be able to respond in a calm and authentic manner.

6. Find your inner strength and become a leader instead of a puppet in the drama.

As you heal your own inner doubts and fears, you remove the barriers that prevent you from being a leader. Insecure people cannot lead because they are too busy worrying about their own image, instead of what others need. When you operate from your authentic core, and give up the grip of your ego, you will make a powerful difference in your workplace.

7. Speak out about what's wrong in your workplace; offer solutions to fix these problems.

Silence when there are problems and issues that need addressing is the same as participating in them. Politely standing by, waiting for someone else to fix things will hold you back and limit your personal evolution. It may seem safer but it is actually a slow path to failure. Trust your inner instincts and follow that guidance. Offer suggestions to remedy the problems.

8. Cultivate a rich external life.

Don't define yourself solely by what happens at work. Your families, your friends, your life outside work are essential elements to your well being. In today's busy and harried workplace, it is easy to give up other interests because you are tired. Don't be tempted to limit your outside experiences. Being an integrated, whole and complete person requires a full and expansive life.

America is at a business crossroads, and the health of our economy may ultimately rest upon the health of our workplaces. The message of my book is that each of us can play a role in shaping a more positive future by our thoughts and deeds.

You are the one who can make a difference in the ego drama at your workplace. When you disengage from the reactions and counter-reactions, you begin the process of unraveling the web of egos. The drama will end as we all stop playing our parts. One by one, the performance will end.

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