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## 8 Ways to Deal with Toxic Work Environment

A toxic work environment is created when an employee feels scared, threatened and uncomfortable in his or her work place due to the offensive behavior, intimidation or abuse by a colleagues or superior.



### What factors defines a toxic work environment

- Whether the conduct was physical or verbal or both
- Whether the conduct was toxic or simply offensive
- Whether the alleged harasser was a colleague or supervisor
- Does anyone else involved in harassment
- Whether the harassment had interfered the work performance of an employee or not

## Role of EEOC



**EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission)** is a federal law enforcement agency that enforces laws against workplace discriminations. It adopts an investigative compliance policy, according to which if employers or respondent fails to turn over requested information about employee's harassment or toxic condition, then they are subjected to legal procedure.

### Behaviors that may contribute to an unlawful toxic environment

- Commenting on physical attributes or disabilities
- Discussing sexual activities and un-necessary touching
- Depicting racially insensitive pictures
- Showing indecent gestures
- Using absurd language
- Sabotaging victim's work
- Engaging in toxic physical conduct
- Using inappropriate terms or epithets
- Over-bearing supervision or misuse of position

### How to deal with toxic Work environment

1. **Standup for yourself:** Do not stay silent about your hostility, defend your activities and speak for yourself. Do whatever you can to avoid such situation
2. **Address the issue directly with the offender:** On your first encounter of offensive behavior from you colleague or supervisor, it's always better to bring their attention on their behavior. Stop them before it get worse
3. **If it still continues:** If the harassment still continues from your colleagues, give him a warning telling further harassment will be referred to HR and management. By this time,

you should document all the conversation made between you and the offender

4. **Inform Management and Human Resources (HR):** When there is no option left, rather than approaching HR and Management, then make sure you have all evidence against offender. Stay calm and address your problem to Management, and let management handle the problem in their own way rather than you asking to fire the employee or take against the offender
5. **If it still Continuous:** After you have addressed to management chances are that the offender was left with a formal warning. And if offender still continues ignoring management warning then you have a ground for a legal action and take the issue to a higher management level
6. **EEO Complaint:** If you are in U.S.A, the federal govt. give you right to complain against toxic environment if the offender is bothering you at work place, the employee might be entitled to personal relief such as restoration of leave or other appropriate compensation. EEO complaint will give an unbiased judgment to plaintiff. EEOC will consider harassment complaint when the complainant is discriminated on the basis of religion, age, gender, disability, nationality, sexual harassment, race or color, pregnancy, and equal wages.
7. **Filing a Lawsuit:** You can file a lawsuit against the offender if you are not convinced with the management actions or if the offender keep abusing you. But before filing lawsuit, you must go through all norms and conditions like after how many days you can file a lawsuit after your formal complain to authorize body.
8. **Don't quit job:** Don't quit the job due to toxic environment unless you think the situation remains persistent and you are not satisfied by the action of management or if it is affecting the productivity of your work. It sounds easy to quit the job to cope with such situation but usually it is not, setting yourself from one company to another will draw ample energy and time.

### How employee can avoid such situation

- **Draw the boundary:** Draw the boundary between your professional life and your work life. Sometimes unnecessary socialization expose your weakness or soft corner to the offender.
- **Be professional:** While working in a toxic environment, make sure that all your action should be professional, ensuring that is not offending anyone personally. This approach will shield you from any kind of bullying or harassment.
- **Remind yourself why you at job:** toxic environment can easily avoidable if you are focused on your work and keep reminding yourself what is the purpose of you being there or your goal. This will bring strength to survive in such condition.
- **Stay calm and focus on work not workplace:** If you build this two quality in you and dedicated to your work, other things will hardly affect you. Even if they still exist it will fade away soon with your mindfulness and positive approach.

### How to document a toxic work environment

- Create an accurate record of the information and evidence that will support your case and make sure your employer takes you seriously

- Gather all policy and document that tells about toxic work environment and action against the offender
- Simply records the facts as they occurred- somewhere in word document or notepad and attach to your mail address
- When addressing manager about harassment through e-mail, always keep your manager or higher authority in CC so they should be aware of the situation
- If you receives any e-mail from manager or higher body addressing your problem, print them out with dates also forward a “bcc” to your home e-mail
- While taking print out any of the document in regards the toxic environment, always mention date on top of it
- Try to communicate with the offender in writing like conversation through e-mail so that you have an evidence of it

### **Steps taken by Company’s Owner or Manager to avoid toxic work-place**

- Create a strict policy for harassment specifically addressing toxic work environment
- Select an appropriate person to oversee the policy
- Send a circular to all employees regarding toxic work environment and action taken against
- Reach out and inquire if a problem is suspected
- Aware employees what all things in work place will fall under toxic work environment
- Always keep a close eye on employees unusual or suspicious behavior in an organization
- Look into complaints and procedures immediately, and address the offender on immediate basis
- Take each report and complaint seriously, evaluate the evidence and determine if the policy rules are violated
- Document all information gathered in the investigation of a claim
- Ensure employee compliance with safety and security policies
- Develop plans for dealing with violence if it occurs
- Follow up on any recommended disciplinary action and make sure it does not repeat in future