

Handling Toxic Environments

Toxic work environments can damage work relationships, performance, and wellbeing and erode healthy boundaries.

It can be helpful to think about how you will react to specific situations before they happen to avoid repeating mistakes and becoming part of the problem.

Reflect on each of the following examples and consider what strategies you could use going forward to improve and clarify your boundaries regarding what is and is not acceptable.

1. When people are gossiping in the office, I can:

Choose not to participate, change the subject to a work-related topic, or excuse myself from the conversation.

Choose your strategies or use the one above:

2. When I'm asked to work long hours, I can:

Communicate my availability and any prior commitments, offering alternative solutions or timelines that respect my work-life balance.

Choose your own strategies or use the one above:

3. When cliques form at work, I can:

Focus on building inclusive relationships and seek out colleagues who share a professional attitude, avoiding getting involved in exclusive groups.

Choose your own strategies or use the one above:

4. When I'm assigned more work on top of my already overwhelming workload, I can:

Discuss my current workload with my manager, prioritizing tasks, setting realistic deadlines, or asking for support where needed.

Choose your own strategies or use the one above:

5. When I have issues with my boss, I can:

Schedule a private meeting to discuss my concerns directly and professionally, aiming to find constructive solutions or compromises.

Choose your own strategies or use the one above:

6. When I have issues with my coworker, I can:

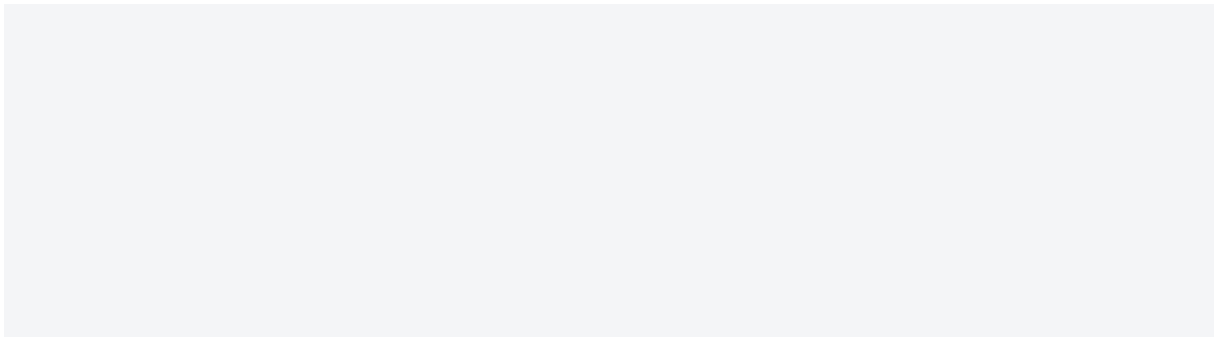
Address the issue calmly and directly with the coworker, expressing how their actions affect me and seeking a mutual understanding or resolution.

Choose your own strategies or use the one above:

7. If I experience sexual harassment, bullying, or mistreatment based on race, physical ability, or sexual orientation, I can:

Report the behavior to HR or another trusted authority within the company, documenting incidents and seeking support from colleagues or professional networks if necessary.

Choose your own strategies or use the one above:



Once complete, stop and reflect for a moment.

Think about those times you've felt content and happy at work.

What were the circumstances?

Reflecting on these moments can help you identify what a healthy work environment looks like for you and work towards it.

References

- Tawwab, N. G. (2021). *Set boundaries workbook: Practical exercises for understanding your needs and setting healthy limits*. Little Brown Book Group.

Dr. Jeremy Sutton, PhD.