



TOXIC WORKPLACE PREVENTION & REPAIR KIT

Facilitator Guide

By Dr. Paul White

To the leaders of the **Toxic Workplace Prevention and Repair** training process:

I wanted to write you a brief note to introduce you to these materials on the toxic workplace. You may not know that these resources were developed in response to experiences I had while presenting the *Appreciation at Work* materials to work groups. Consistently, participants would comment on how negative their workplace was and often how toxic their boss was.

As a result, my co-authors and I researched the issues more deeply—interviewing both employees and supervisors who had worked in unhealthy workplaces and we obtained input from leaders on what makes toxic environments and how to survive them. Our findings lead to our book, ***Rising Above A Toxic Workplace***, then these training materials, and the *Ratings Of Toxic Symptoms scale*.

One lesson I've learned from the process of writing books is that, after the books have been published, I continue to gather important lessons and concepts. Hence, the additional resources provide different viewpoints on the toxic workplace.

Additionally, individuals request supplemental information on topics not covered as fully as they wanted, which led to writing the pamphlets *How to Know It is Time to Quit Your Job*, and *How to Avoid Being Hired by a Toxic Workplace*.

If you haven't yet taken the *Ratings Of Toxic Symptoms (ROTS)* scale, I would strongly encourage you to do so; a free code is included for you to take the ROTs. You will then see the seven core areas identified that lead to toxic workplaces and resources to help in each of those areas.

Finally, if you aren't familiar with *The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace*, the *Motivation by Appreciation Inventory*, and the *Appreciation at Work* training resources—please explore them as they provide creative resources for helping “turn around” negative work environments. Also, check out the www.appreciationatwork.com website as we are continually developing additional resources.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul E. White, PhD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'P'.

Paul White, PhD
President, Appreciation at Work



TOXIC WORKPLACE PREVENTION & REPAIR

Section 1: Introduction

This outline gives instructions for delivering the content for Section 1. For each piece of content in the participant handouts, you will find suggestions for teaching the content, plus instructions for completing the activities.

This introductory session is comprised of:

- a) The normal steps needed to welcome, structure and set up a learning workshop;
- b) An introductory video (5:00 minutes) by Dr. White;
- c) A large group discussion led by the facilitator that utilizes PowerPoint slides and handouts;
- d) Transitioning to the first major content section (Section 2: Sick Systems).

Overall Course Objectives:

This course has the following main objectives. By completing this course, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the three overall areas that, when combined, make a workplace toxic.
2. Identify and avoid the problem behavior patterns that individuals can be drawn into unwittingly.
3. Utilize available tools and resources to make a positive impact on their workplace relationships.

Key Objective: Section 1

Participants will be able to globally describe what a “toxic” workplace is like, identifying the 3 core components of an unhealthy work environment.

Preparation and Set Up: Section 1

1. Make sure you have the technology set up to show PowerPoint slides and also a video (with sound). Have title slide of PowerPoint Section 1 up and showing.
2. Have a tripod with paper or whiteboard and markers to capture notes from the group discussion.
3. Distribute handouts for each participant and make sure they have a writing instrument.

A Activity: Table Discussion

Have participants work in groups for the discussion question for this topic.

- Which of these two communication patterns do you see most often in companies with toxicity problems?
- What do they look like in practical daily work life?

Debrief as a large group, having them share observations from their table discussions.

F Problems With Policies & Procedures

1. Lack of Procedures in Place

There are some companies who don't have any established policies or procedures. This could be due to a couple of reasons:

a) the company is young and hasn't gone through the process of creating them, or **b)** tasks are simply done more on an informal basis. In either case, things are handled on an inconsistent basis, which creates confusion.

2. Poorly Designed Processes

In some cases the policies exist, but they just don't make sense. They are either confusing, or they are changed so frequently that no one knows what the current policy actually is.

3. Policies not being Followed

In extreme cases, policies are simply not followed and unhealthy patterns begin to develop:

- There are so many rules and regulations that people begin to ignore them or find ways to work around them.
- The rules seem to “apply to some and not to others”. When this happens, employees who are supposed to oversee the task may become offended and a conflict arises. In some cases, legal problems can occur as a result of employees “working around” the stated policies.

D Which of these three do you think present the greatest challenge for your organization? Why?

Next Slide

- Truly toxic environments can seem overwhelming. What can you do?
How do you survive?
- The key is to focus on your actions and responses – and just start somewhere.
Do what you can (and leave the rest).

Next Slide

Read the following quote aloud:

“Life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it.”

John Maxwell
Leadership Guru

Share: We all have difficult situations in life (sometimes more than other times) and there are things we cannot control. But we can control how we react and respond to the circumstances.

D Discussion Question:

Have participants talk through ways we often react to stressful situations or people. Show the PowerPoint side and discuss the question:

- What are some ways that we sometimes react to others (or situations) that aren't that helpful?

V Show Dr. White's Video: Conclusion (approximately 6:30 minutes long).

After showing the video move into the process of helping the participants figure out their next action steps. (Go to the PowerPoint slides on “What can I do?” and the next section.)

F Brief Facilitator Sharing:

Key Question

What can I do?

- Often, in difficult situations, we focus on what OTHER people should be doing differently (and maybe they should).
- But we really only have control over ourselves, so we need to start there – with what WE can do to start to make a difference.

Action Item: Personal Application

Talk through the steps the participants can take to help themselves moving forward.

- Identify one or two issues that struck you today.
- Choose someone with whom you would like to share these points.
- Pick one action that you can take in your life this week that will either:
 - Help you take better care of yourself, or
 - Keep you from contributing to the negativity in the work environment.



At An Organizational Level

The participants may or may not be in the position of authority to have much influence on the organization. But if they do, it would be good for them to figure out how to share their concerns with others who do have the ability to make changes in the organization. Share the following steps to take at an organizational level:

- Identify some key issues your organization needs to address.
- Consider taking the *Ratings Of Toxic Symptoms* scale.
- Order the **Toxic Prevention & Repair Kit** so you can take your leaders and teams through this process.
- Go to www.appreciationatwork.com/toxicworkplaces for other resources.

Conclusion

Be encouraging. They can make a difference with small steps

- All work settings are dysfunctional to some degree, some are just more dysfunctional than others!
- Do what you can to help your workplace move toward health.
 - Commit to honest, direct communication.
 - Strive to be thankful and positive.

Dismiss

Offer to be available to help participants in whatever way you can.