

How to Maintain Psychological Safety in A Toxic Workplace

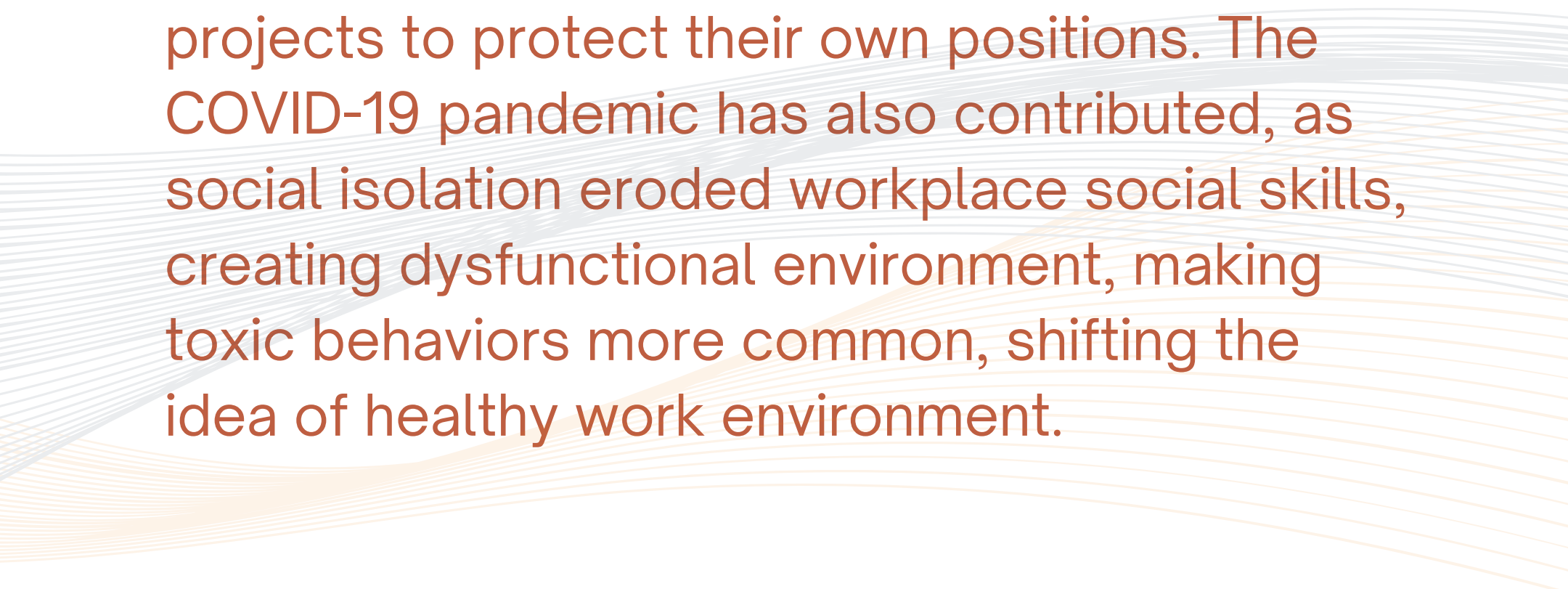
A short guide



Why Does Toxicity Happen?



Toxic behavior often stems from insecurity or a desire for control. Leaders or coworkers who feel threatened may resort to undermining others, gossiping, or sabotaging projects to protect their own positions. The COVID-19 pandemic has also contributed, as social isolation eroded workplace social skills, creating dysfunctional environment, making toxic behaviors more common, shifting the idea of healthy work environment.



Practical Strategies to Maintain Psychological Safety

Toxic workplaces have become a growing topic of conversation as more people recognize the profound impact unhealthy work environments can have on mental health, productivity, and overall well-being. Even if you can't change the entire culture, you can take steps to protect your own psychological safety and foster it within your sphere of influence:

Build a Trusted Network:

Connect with colleagues who share your values and can offer mutual support. Kusy and Holloway recommend building “communities of respectful engagement” as a buffer against toxic personalities, creating small pockets of psychological safety even in difficult environments.





Model Safe Behaviors:

Demonstrate openness by admitting mistakes, asking for feedback, and supporting others when they take interpersonal risks. According to Toxic Workplace!, leaders and peers who model vulnerability and respect help set new norms, even in toxic systems.

Set Clear Boundaries

Protect your mental space by limiting interactions with toxic individuals when possible and clarifying your own limits. This aligns with advice from workplace experts who suggest negotiating roles or shifts to minimize exposure to harmful behaviors.





Document and Communicate

Keep records of problematic interactions and, when safe, communicate your concerns to trusted managers or HR. This not only protects you but can also encourage transparency and accountability.

Focus on What You Can Control

While you may not be able to fix the entire culture, you can control your reactions and maintain your personal integrity. Toxic Workplace! provides research-based strategies for reducing the intensity and frequency of toxic behaviors by focusing on respectful engagement and self-care.



Small Acts, Big Impact

Maintaining psychological safety isn't just about grand gestures. Small acts—like showing kindness, listening without judgment, and celebrating team wins, can make a significant difference. As Toxic Workplace! suggests, even in the most difficult settings, consistent respectful behavior can slowly shift team dynamics and offer hope to those affected by toxicity.



TALENT OPTIMIZATION SPECIALISTS