

# 7 Tips for Staying Positive in a Toxic Workplace

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At one point or another, most people have found themselves working in a less than ideal environment. Maybe it's a manager, a peer, or the team's values or vision that's bothersome. Or maybe there's simply a gnawing feeling that something's wrong.

Recently, I asked my students in the Career Preparation course I teach at the Quinlan School of Business at Loyola University Chicago if they've ever had a “bad boss” or toxic colleague or classmate, and over 90 percent raised their hands.

There's a lot we need to do as a culture to improve the workplace, and while generally speaking the workplace at large *is* moving in a more empathetic, positive direction, toxic environments still exist. So what can you do to remain positive if you find yourself in this type of situation? Here are seven things you can do.

## **1. Find a compatriot.**

We feel it, we are told it, and the research supports it: friends matter. Having someone we're close with at work helps us a lot. Having people in your corner, who get you, and understand your circumstance—good or bad—is extremely helpful in the workplace. This can be even truer when you are in a less than ideal environment. Having at least one friend at work when times are tough can be what makes or breaks you staying at the firm, or remaining sane while you look for what's next.

## **2. Talk with someone.**

Maybe your workplace is small or you don't connect with your colleagues, or maybe you simply don't have a work BFF (and that's part of the problem). You don't need to communicate your concerns or uneasiness with colleagues but you do need to communicate it to someone. Talk with a friend, a family member, therapist, coach—someone. One of the worst things to do when you're in the middle of a toxic work environment is to keep it to yourself. This breeds the mental reactions also bred by gas lighting (which can be a symptom of a toxic environment!) and you'll begin to wonder if *you're* the problem. Talking with someone will help you deduce fact from fiction.

## **3. Take breaks and use your PTO wisely.**

You have PTO and a lunch break for a reason. Downtime, space, and rest are essential. You need them even more if you're in a toxic environment. It's nice to dart off to a tropical island to recharge—and if you can and that's what you want, you should! But if you can't take an extended vacation or short trip out of town that's okay, too. Find small ways to take breaks daily. Leave your desk for lunch. Go on a five-minute walk alone. Walk to the ladies room and stay for a moment longer. Even the busiest of days at the most demanding companies there are ways to find a moment for you.

## **4. Exercise.**

There's a reason exercise is almost always on the list of any recommendations for maintaining sanity, composure, and happiness. This is because what exercise does for the mind and body is really remarkable. Whether it's yoga that helps you get centered, an intense spin class that makes you focus on nothing else for 45 minutes, a brisk walk, or anything in between, moving your body will help you cope, stay positive, and react more rationally. It's a big bonus if you can exercise during a break in your workday.

## **5. Set goals.**

Goal setting is one of the most effective tactics for personal and professional growth. If you're struggling to remain positive, use this tactic. For a short-term approach, set small, micro-goals. Maybe commit to "catching" yourself each time you start slipping into a negative thought, or organize a happy hour within the next three weeks, or make it a point to have lunch with two new peers. If you're struggling to determine where your role at this toxic company fits into your larger career, consider things like: What are you hoping to accomplish from this role? What are your limits? And it's important to set personal goals that are yours alone, so you can decide what's best for you regarding staying or going. I firmly believe in the power of goal setting, but also believe it is deeply personal and therefore does not have to fit a certain mold.

## **6. Establish and honor your limits.**

If you've done all these things and your situation still feels unbearable or unfixable, that might be because it is. If you've found ways to cope, brought positivity to work, taken breaks and taken care of yourself, established

short and long-term goals to propel yourself forward, but still have determined this is not a good environment for you—honor that. Have an honest conversation with yourself or, even better, have one with someone else.

### **7. If you want to leave, develop a strategy.**

I used to be shocked when my clients would tell me they've been in toxic work environment—or simply painstakingly unhappy—for years. Now I realize how common it is, but also that it's fixable. Of course, sometimes there are reasons why you can't just up and leave a job, but if you are unhappy, if you are in a toxic environment, if you want and are ready for something different, you must come up with and execute a strategy to move yourself forward. This will not just happen to you. Remember, you are responsible for you, and you must take your career and life into your own hands. If you decide you need to leave the team, a specific manager, the company, the city, the state, the country, I'm telling you that it *is* possible. But, you will need to work hard for it.

How you do this is to connect with yourself and your wants, talk with a mentor or a trusted friend, or hire a coach if you need someone objective and outside your network. Come up with a game plan and go. Negative work environments are real and can wreak havoc on all aspects of your life. But they don't have to! Find the techniques to remain positive and productive that work for you, and be honest with yourself if it's time for a change. Your family, friends, and your future-self will thank you.

Source: [http://www.vault.com/blog/workplace-issues/7-tips-for-staying-positive-in-a-toxic-workplace/?utm\\_source=UndergradNewsletter&utm\\_medium=Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=12\\_13\\_2017\\_UG&referer\\_ID=7778](http://www.vault.com/blog/workplace-issues/7-tips-for-staying-positive-in-a-toxic-workplace/?utm_source=UndergradNewsletter&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_campaign=12_13_2017_UG&referer_ID=7778)