



4 SIGNS YOU ARE IN A **TOXIC** WORKPLACE





“I CAN’T keep going like this. And even IF I could, I wouldn’t.”

Julie was describing her experience at a recent employer. Though her role in this large organization had begun with an above-average salary and room for growth and promotion, the early promise she had felt was quickly replaced by a sense that she was not truly valued, not safe to share her opinions, and not being heard when she would raise important issues. When we spoke she was right in the middle of trying to deal with these issues, which caused her so much stress and anxiety, it led her to seek medical support. The challenges Julie experienced continued, and though she sought remedy through the right channels, no solution was found. In the end, she left the company for another opportunity.

As tragic as Julie’s situation is, she is not alone. In July 2019, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) undertook a survey of the U.S. workforce to better understand the importance of workplace culture and its profound impact on employees. Here are some highlights:

- 1 in 4 employees dread going to work, don’t feel safe voicing their opinions about work-related issues, and they also don’t feel respected and valued at work.
- 36% of employees say their manager doesn’t know how to lead a team.
- 40% of employees say their manager fails to frequently engage in honest and transparent conversations about work topics.
- 58% of those who left a job due to culture claim managers are the main reason they left.
- The cost of turnover due to workplace culture is \$223 billion in the past 5 years.

As noted, SHRM conducted their research in July 2019. Given workplace challenges throughout COVID-19 and the mental-health challenges of anxiety and depression as we move slowly through the pandemic, these numbers are likely already worse. Toxic workplaces have not gone away and may even be worse.

According to research from Gallup, 50% of employees leave their companies because of their boss. A Gallup study revealed that one in two employees had left their job to get away from a manager and improve their overall life at some point in their career. Obviously, toxic workplaces and leaders not only increase turnover, but increase absenteeism, decrease performance and high customer ratings, and ultimately decrease profits.

**AT FLOURISHING
WORKPLACE,
OUR PASSION IS
UNDERSTANDING
TOXIC WORKPLACES
AND THEIR SIGNS,
AND HOW EACH OF
US CAN BEGIN TO
CREATE A NEW
REALITY.**



Our mission is to change the world by changing the workplace. It all starts by detoxing a toxic workplace and replacing it with a Flourishing Workplace.

**So, what are the 4 Signs You Are In A Toxic Workplace?
And what are the Solutions?**



TOXIC WORKPLACE SIGN #1

NOT FEELING SEEN...



The Solution Is **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We all want to feel seen. When team members hear things like “Thank you”, “I see your contributions”, or “That made a difference”, it impacts the workplace more than we realize. Verbal praise is only one way to show appreciation at work, but there are other ways as well. Being thoughtful in work assignments that will set employees up for success is another. Feedback is important!

It’s hard for a team member to do well in a project if they feel unequipped. Employers can also show appreciation by being thoughtful about what projects coworkers are being given and why. Another way employers can show appreciation is to have time for employees when they need help or extra support.

Employers also need to be aware of how negative comments, not having healthy boundaries, not protecting the team from negativity, and not making sure that everyone feels seen can deeply impact employees. Acknowledgement is the solution when people do not feel seen.

TOXIC WORKPLACE SIGN #2 *NOT FEELING HEARD...*



The Solution Is **LISTENING**

We all want to feel heard and listened to. 64% of 675 professional workers in the U.S. and Canada who were polled said that “leaders making decisions without seeking input” was the biggest problem. One study found that while companies are looking for new ways to improve, 82% of their team have ideas that could help achieve their goals. Sadly, the same study found more than 1/3 of staffers think their company doesn’t listen to their ideas for improvement.

The tragedy is that when people do not feel heard, they tend to stop speaking. And when team members stop speaking, they stop engaging. In “The One Minute Manager” by Kenneth Blanchard, we see that the best way to create employee engagement is to allocate time to listen to them.

The breakthrough is the realization that we can all listen more, and we can all listen better. It just takes a simple decision on the part of a leader to detox the environment with the power of hearing and listening. Psychologist Carl Rogers said that “active listening is a difficult discipline. It requires intense concentration and attention to everything the person is conveying, both verbally and nonverbally.” Giving people the gift of feeling heard is well worth the investment. **Listening** is the solution when people do not feel heard.

TOXIC WORKPLACE SIGN #3

NOT FEELING UNDERSTOOD...

The Solution Is **EMPATHY**

We all want, and even need, to feel understood. An interesting study was conducted in 2008 that looked at whether people feel happier and healthier when they feel more understood in daily social interactions. Not surprisingly, people reported greater life satisfaction and fewer physical symptoms on days in which they felt more understood by others. The study concluded that daily social experiences, such as felt understanding, are associated with daily well-being. A Swedish proverb says, "Shared joy is a double joy; shared sorrow is half a sorrow."



We positively contribute to the mental and physical wellbeing of others when we take time to understand and be empathetic. It may surprise you to note that work environments that are described as "all business and no fun" are environments where employees do not feel understood. If a workplace is all business but no fun, it could be connected to the personality of the leader. If the leader is reserved or introverted, they may not identify with their staff who would truly benefit from fun in the workplace. Effective leaders create ways to engage all their employees. For areas outside of their own sweet spot, they can lean into their employees who do have strengths, skills, and passions in those areas. This brings diversity and creativity, as well as demonstrating how leaders see and value what each team member brings to the team. Having no fun at work is a fast way to destroy a company's culture or make it a toxic environment to work in. People need a safe way to blow off steam even at work.

It is unfortunate that many business owners think that all work and no play is the best way to maximize productivity. However, studies have shown when workplaces make fun a part of the work culture, it creates happy employees. Workplaces that promote fun experience motivation, productivity, satisfaction, and overall improved performance. Having fun is also a great way to improving employees' emotional regulation. Fun improves teamwork and trust among team members. Fun also increases creativity because it allows for employees to think playfully. Children aren't afraid to make mistakes when they play. Play increases a team's ability to take risks and innovate. Fun also strengthens team relationships and when a team enjoys the time they spend together, they become more engaged. Most importantly, having fun at work demonstrates that the leader "gets it", understands, and is empathetic. Empathy is the solution when people do not feel understood.



TOXIC WORKPLACE SIGN #4

NOT FEELING CLEAR...

The Solution Is **TRANSPARENCY**



We all want clarity. As Brené Brown says, “Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind”. When there is a lack of clarity around expectations, employees do not know how to show up, how to act, or what to take ownership of. They find it difficult to lean into their place on the team, where they can most effectively add value, and how they can best contribute.

However, when there is clarity around roles and expectations, employees can see how they fit and where they can best contribute. Team members align themselves to the team, and open communication exponentially grows. This sort of transparency leads to trust, mutual accountability, along with higher levels of satisfaction and productivity.



Being in open conversations is crucial. Talking directly to the employee involved and asking respectful questions is always a healthy starting point. Questions like, “What’s really going on? Can we talk about what the real problem may be?”, reinforced with “tell me more”. Seeking to understand first and to better understand motivations are crucial for misunderstandings to be lessened. Most people do better when they know better.

People are doing the best they can with what they know, so be sure they know. Believe the best about employees and give them the clarity they need. **Transparency** is the solution when people do not feel clear.



These 4 Signs That You Are In A Toxic Workplace act as warning lights on your dashboard, helping you see that something may be dysfunctional underneath, and to dig a little deeper.

It is everyone’s responsibility to guard the culture of the workplace and shut down toxicity when it arises, and the leader sets the tone. As John Maxwell says, “Everything rises and falls on leadership”. What gets celebrated is what will emerge; what is acknowledged will rise. If the workplace celebrates acknowledgement, listening, empathy, and transparency, then a toxic workplace will be replaced by a flourishing workplace.

ABE BROWN, CEO

Flourishing Workplace



Abe Brown, MBA, CMCT, CPHSA is the Coach's Coach, and is an Entrepreneur, Professional Speaker, International Best-Selling Author, and High-Performance Leadership Coach. He is the founder of Certified Flourishing Coaching™, the Flourishing Life Coaching Program™, the CEO of Wellness Innovate Corp, and the CEO of Momentum Coaching.

Abe is known as the Coach's Coach, and for being people-first. He is most passionate about supporting people, relationships, entrepreneurs, businesses, and non-profits to thrive. Flourishing people produce flourishing relationships, businesses, and workplaces, along with high performance and profound positive impact. Abe is also passionate about workplace mental health and changing the world by changing the workplace. Along with the team at Wellness Innovate, Abe is the creator of Flourishing Workplaces™.

Abe has started or led several businesses and non-profits into the tens of millions of dollars, and has worked in the entrepreneur space, the corporate space, and the non-profit space at Senior Executive levels. Abe is focused on coaching leaders, executives, and entrepreneurs towards high-performance, resilience, overall mental wellbeing, and flourishing.

Abe earned a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Calgary Haskayne School of Business, and a Master's in Religious Education and Counselling.

CONNIE JAKAB, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY

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Connie Jakab has been working in resilience and flourishing for over 20 years. Starting with youth at risk and gangs in East Vancouver, Connie has been researching how community creates resilience and mental wellness her entire career through a sociological lens.

She has owned and started three companies, along with a non-profit from scratch, growing her businesses to empower others to grow and expand their personal potential. Her passion to see others reach their potential has allowed her to oversee regional and national high-performance teams. She has been working to ignite Brave Communities and Collaborations in teams for over 20 years.

She is the author of three books, the third one selling out within the first six months. Connie has spoken on stages all over North America, impacting audiences with her passion and compassion. Connie was recently given the award “Woman of Inspiration Top 150 in Canada” for her passion to see others flourish.



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