



Workplace Post Traumatic Stress Condition®

Culprit Gone – Toxic Culture Remains?

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Some people are anticipating or are already experiencing backlash or whiplash based on leadership changes. It could be the recent change in Administrations or any type of new leadership, but this may sound familiar ...

“An abusive, overbearing leader created an environment of mistrust, confusion, and anxiety which you were fortunately able to navigate. You had to—in order to keep your job. You tolerated the pressure and the abuse, and occasionally had to carry out actions that you did not agree with or support, but you followed orders and it has had ramifications. Now the leadership has changed, but the culture of toxicity somehow still lingers. People have been damaged, and quite frankly, you don’t even know who you are anymore!

Or perhaps ...

“The toxic CEO was given a severance package, and the COO is now acting CEO. “Ding Dong, the witch is dead”—everyone is singing! But somehow nothing else has changed. New employees are resigning. Old employees are still making accusations and fighting, and the toxic work culture remains! Wasn’t the problem resolved when the witch was let go?”

How about this ...

“The arrogant, cruel leader moved up through the ranks and he brought you with him every step of the way! The executives were the only ones who could handle the pressure and endure the madness. Somehow the financial gains seemed to justify the culture of toxicity, so you all lived in fear until he moved on. He has been gone a year, but the work culture has still not recovered. Complaints are surfacing, the staff is suffering, and you desire a healthy transition, but don’t know how to make it happen.”

If aspects of these scenarios sound familiar, let me share a concept with you. We have seen these problems repeatedly, and accurately diagnosed them as **Workplace Post Traumatic Stress Condition**[®] (W-PTSC[®]). Mimicking the better-known Post Traumatic Stress **Disorder** (PTSD), Workplace Post Traumatic Stress Condition[®], W-PTSC[®] occurs when traumatic work-related situations occur, often repeatedly, causing intense distress and anxiety. To maintain employment, continue to deliver results, and maintain a level of normalcy and sanity, employees push intensely disturbing feelings and thoughts to the back of their minds. Day in and day out they struggle to avoid fear-based breakdowns and anger-driven confrontations.

This works for a while and normalcy can be simulated while the job is maintained, until a new job is found, or until the toxic workplace culture is brought under control. But there is an underlying problem. And later, when co-workers or managers begin to exhibit behaviors that remind a traumatized employee of an event from the past, or situations occur that seem to be leading to similar outcomes from the past, the previously traumatized employees respond with strong negative over-reactions or emotional outbursts. The employee exhibits uncontrolled **Workplace Post Traumatic Stress Condition**[®] (W-PTSC[®]). These over-reactions often lead to miscommunication and misunderstandings causing ruined relationships, insubordination, complaints of abuse, re-creating hostile work environments, complaints of discrimination, and ultimately the toxicity that once was, resurfaces.

We have consulted with numerous clients experiencing these issues and have been able to resolve it successfully and restore healthy cultures over time. We begin by conducting an assessment to diagnose the culture and identify employees that have experienced or are currently experiencing toxic events or activities that could have caused W-PTSC[®] trauma such as:

- Managers or colleagues bullying, threatening, and retaliating, creating an environment of fear and intimidation
- Employees being fired unexpectedly with no warning
- Being lied to or work being stolen by jealous colleagues
- Whistle-blowers experiencing severe retaliation
- Having your job routinely threatened
- Being routinely forced to take on tasks that are illegal / immoral / outside of / in addition to their job duties
- Managers accusing them of shirking their responsibilities and lying about it
- Being bullied and insulted by colleagues or management with no repercussions

- Forced to tolerate managers or colleagues propositioning them and making rude advances

Once we identify the past situations and the impact they have had on employees, we can begin the interventions necessary to help employees understand how W-PTSC® may be affecting them. It is important that the trauma be recognized by the employee, so that we can collaborate on the appropriate healing actions required. It is critical that the parties involved see themselves, the environment, the culture, and one another differently. Interventions often include facilitating crucial conversations to address trust issues and forgiveness, re-defining organizational values, and addressing the cultural norms and practices.

Some employees start by doubting that the Condition exists. However, once an employee begins to acknowledge their own W-PTSC®, we can give them tools to help them change and control their feelings, thoughts and beliefs, deal with trauma reminders, and balance negative thinking patterns. In some cases, we recommend relaxation techniques such as breathing, journaling, and mindfulness exercises to help them reduce stress and regain professional control and leadership acumen. In other cases, we might deploy coaching, training, or medically-focused options.

If your organization is struggling to recover from, or avoid W-PTSC®, or if new leaders are trying to unlock the organization's potential and create safe spaces for the employees, you might want to contact Wanda Savage-Moore, The GIT Coach, LLC, 703-407-8281 and schedule your W-PTSC® assessment today.