

Note from the authors:

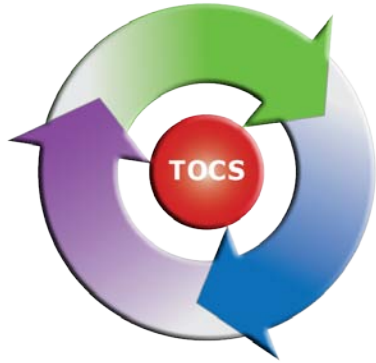
Elizabeth Holloway, PhD

Mitchell Kusy, PhD

These slides give a general overview of our research study on toxicity in the workplace.

Please visit our website

www.toxicpersonalities.com or our book *Toxic Workplace! Managing Toxic Personalities and their Systems of Power* at www.amazon.com for intervention strategies.



Toxicity in the Workplace!

Elizabeth Holloway, PhD

Mitchell Kusy, PhD

Leadership & Change Program

Antioch University

*"The day this person left is
considered an annual holiday
in our organization !"*



Toxic behaviors

*undermine
organizational
productivity
and work-life
effectiveness.*



The Human Bottom Line

“Working under my toxic leader....I never realized the toll this had taken on my health and well being until I found myself in a hospital bed at 40 having just had a heart attack.”





In the
words of
our leaders

"It was Christmas time. And I was trying to put the tree in the stand and the damn thing wouldn't fit. So I got a hammer and am in the living room hammering this thing and my wife came in and she said, 'Either you leave that place or I'm leaving you.'"



Brewing of the Perfect Storm

- During times of economic downturn, fears bring out the worst in people especially toxic personalities who can spin out of control
- As organizations run leaner due to layoffs and cost-cutting, it's sometimes easier to enable toxic behaviors rather than deal with them directly

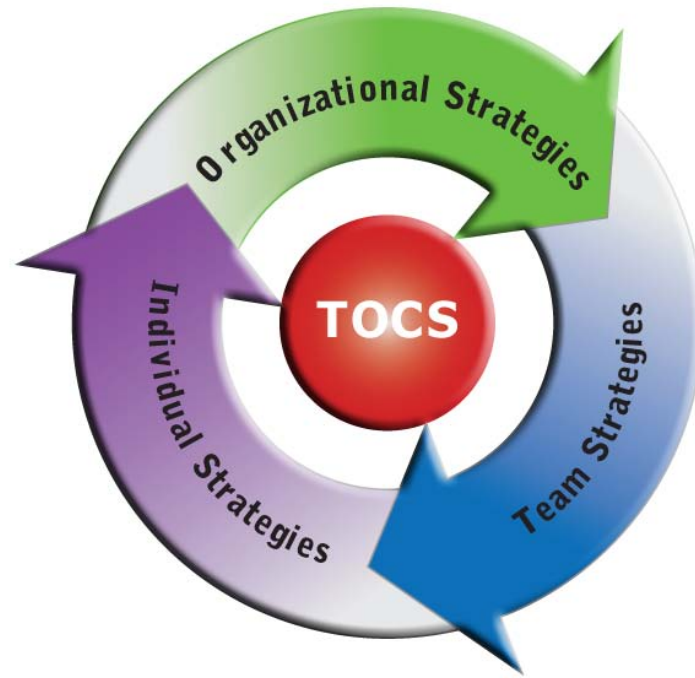


A healthy organization

Manages
toxicity and
minimizes
human and
financial
losses



TOCS



Toxic Organization Change System

builds actions that reduce the toxic person's impact & builds values of respectful engagement.



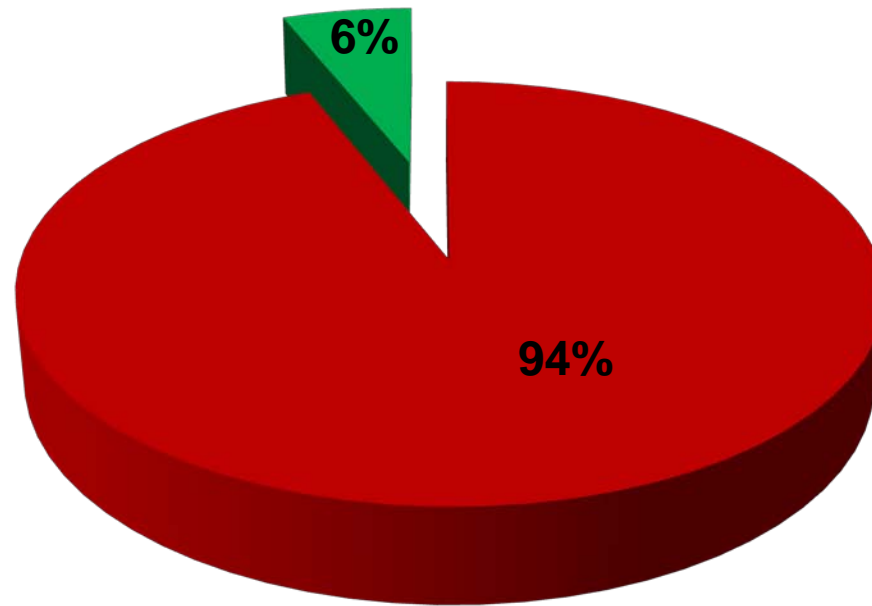
Today's Focus

- Why address toxicity in the workplace?
- What are the 3 toxic behaviors?
- How do leaders typically react?
- What should they do immediately?
- What should they do long-term?



Why Address Toxicity in the Workplace?

**94% of Leaders Have
Experience with Toxic Persons**



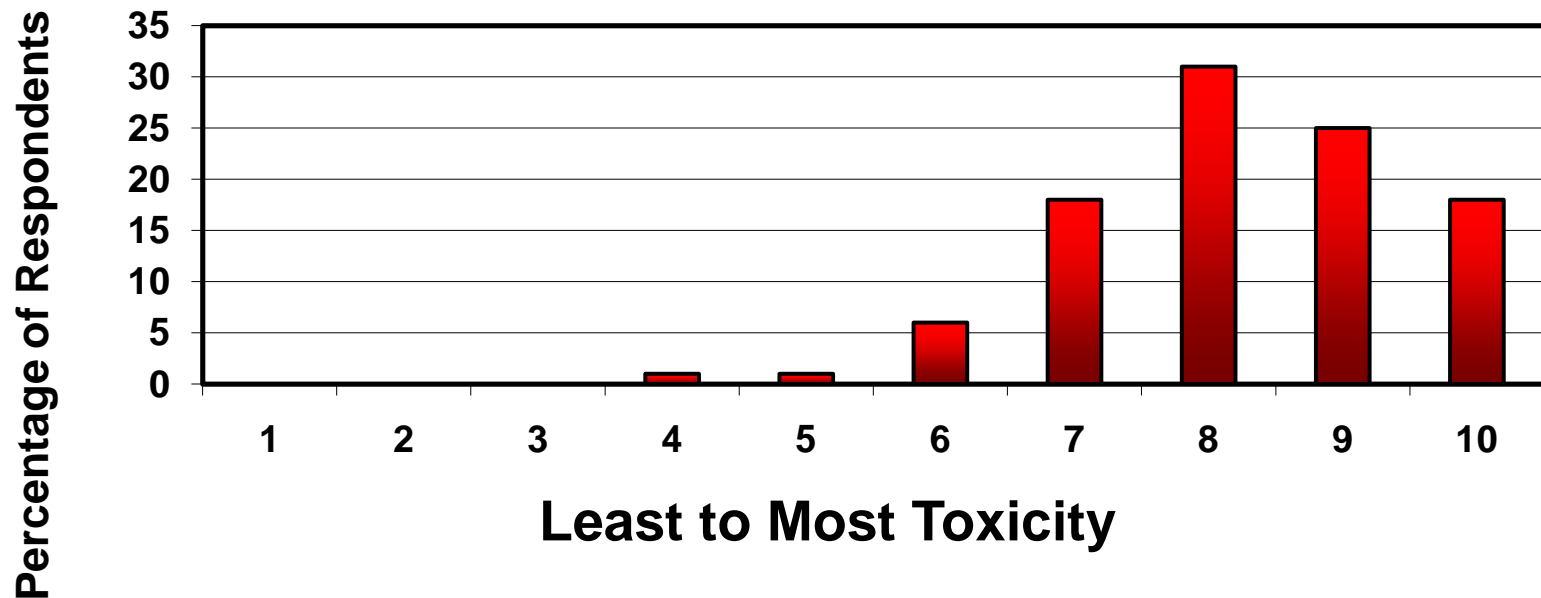
Who are Toxic Persons?

Individuals who demonstrate a pattern of counterproductive work behaviors that seriously debilitate individuals, work teams, and organizations over the long-term.



What Degree of Toxicity?

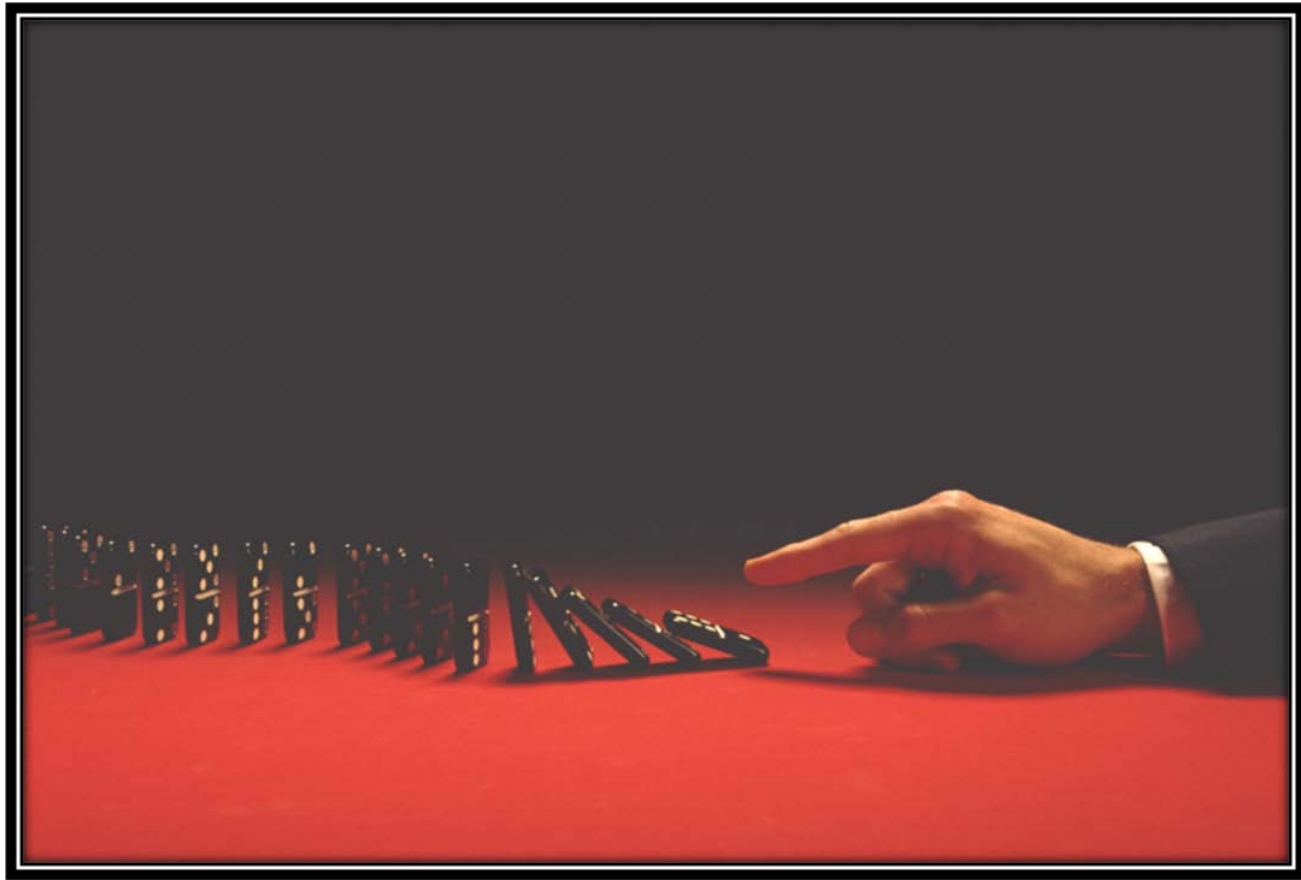
Level of Toxicity

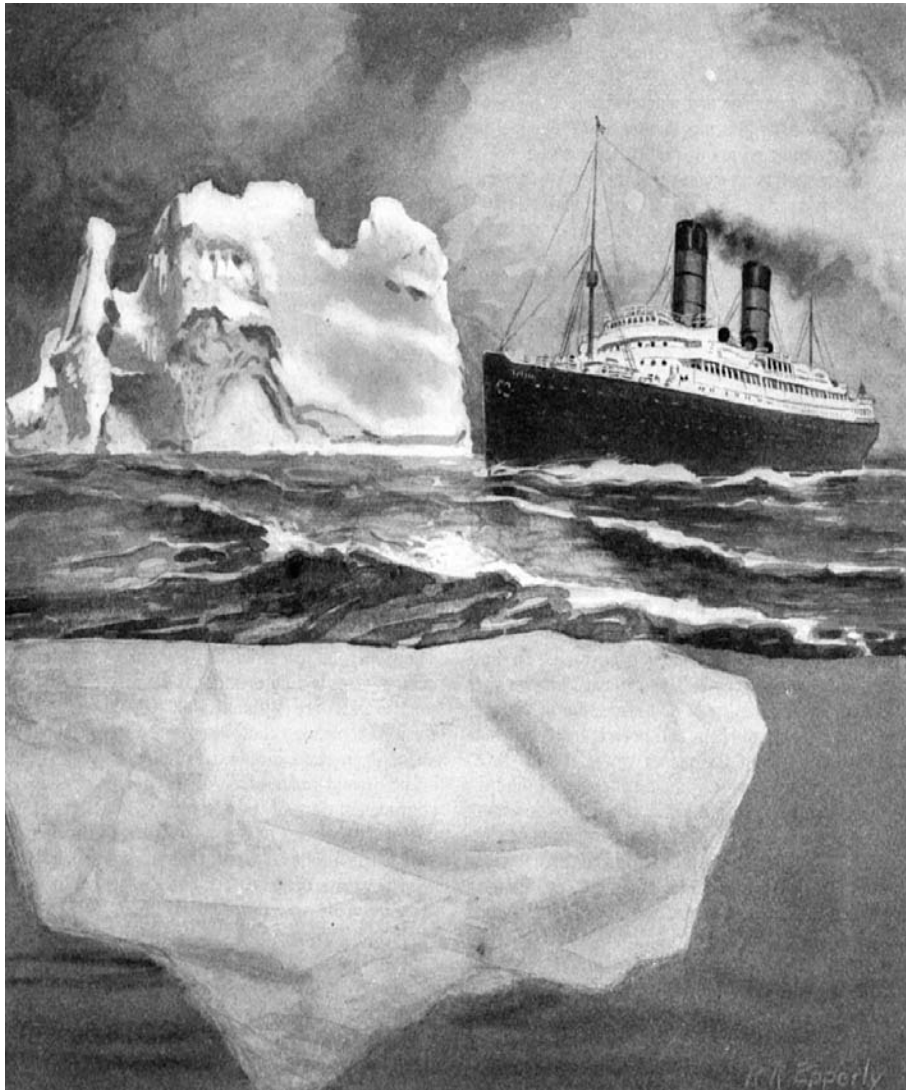


One Bad Apple Spoils the Bunch!



Organizational Impact





Below the surface
ready to sink the
mother ship are the
hidden effects of the
toxic person



Toxic Behavior Effects

- 48% decreased their work effort
- 47% decreased time at work
- 38% decreased work quality
- 68% said their performance declined
- 80% said they lost time worrying about it
- 63% lost time avoiding the person
- 78% said their commitment to the organization declined

Porath & Pearson, 2009



Our Interview Study

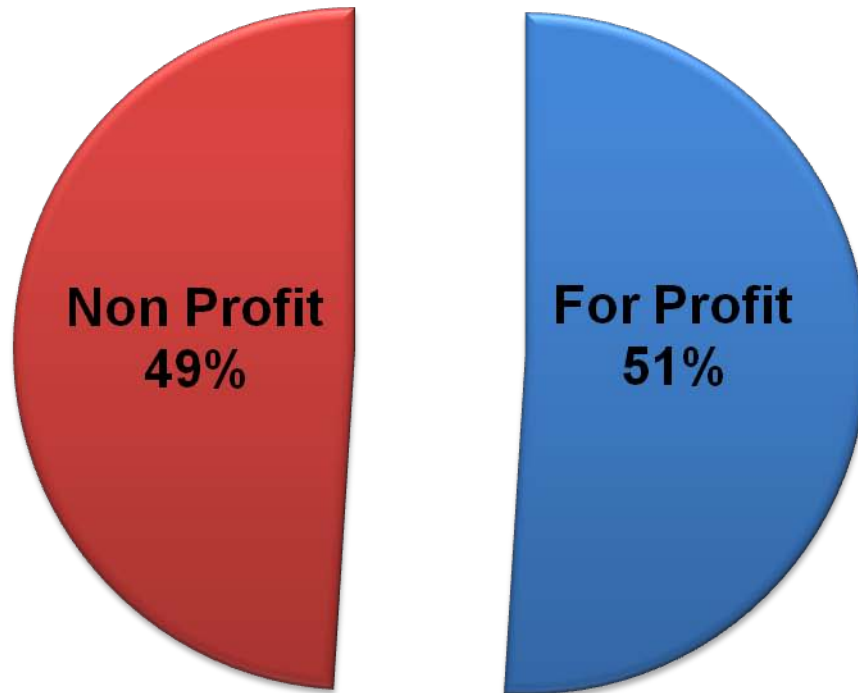


Our Survey Study

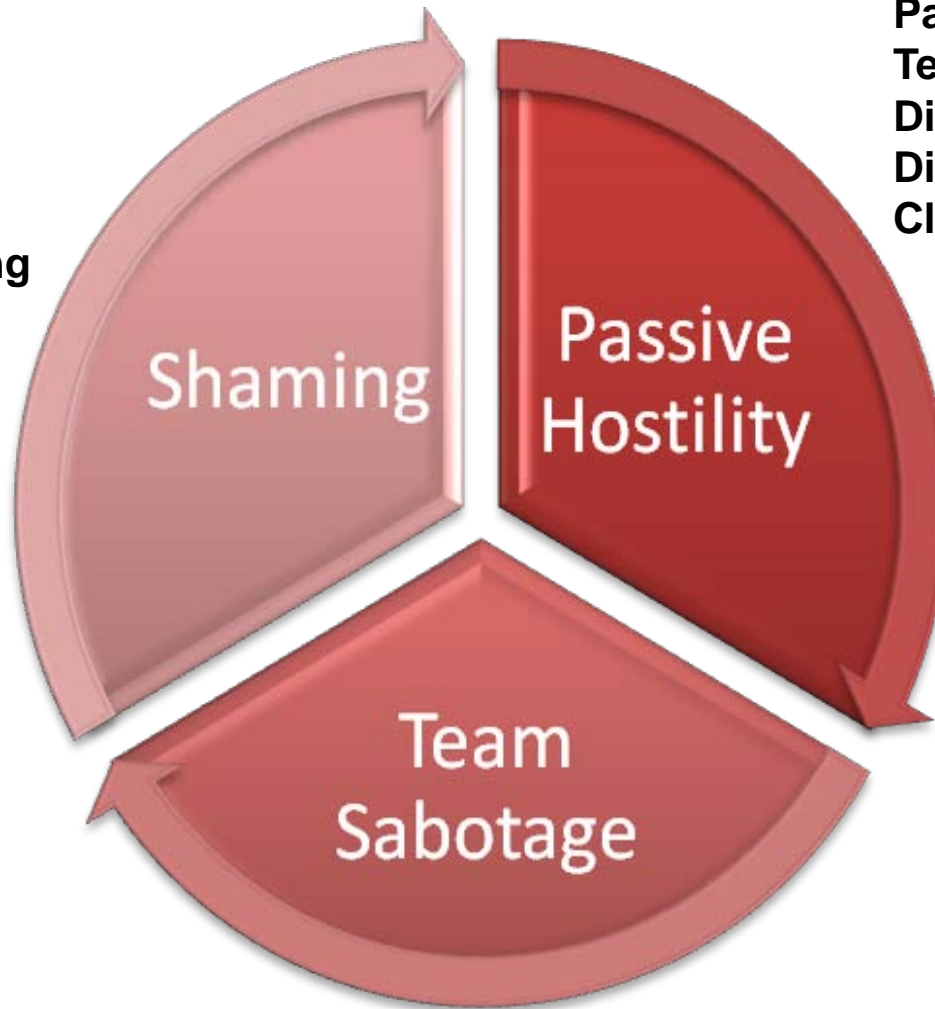
- 962 leaders were invited to participate from both profit and non-profit organizations;
- 42% responded to the survey with both quantitative data and 72 pages of single-spaced comments



Organization Breakdown



Humiliation
Sarcasm
Pot shots
Mistake-pointing

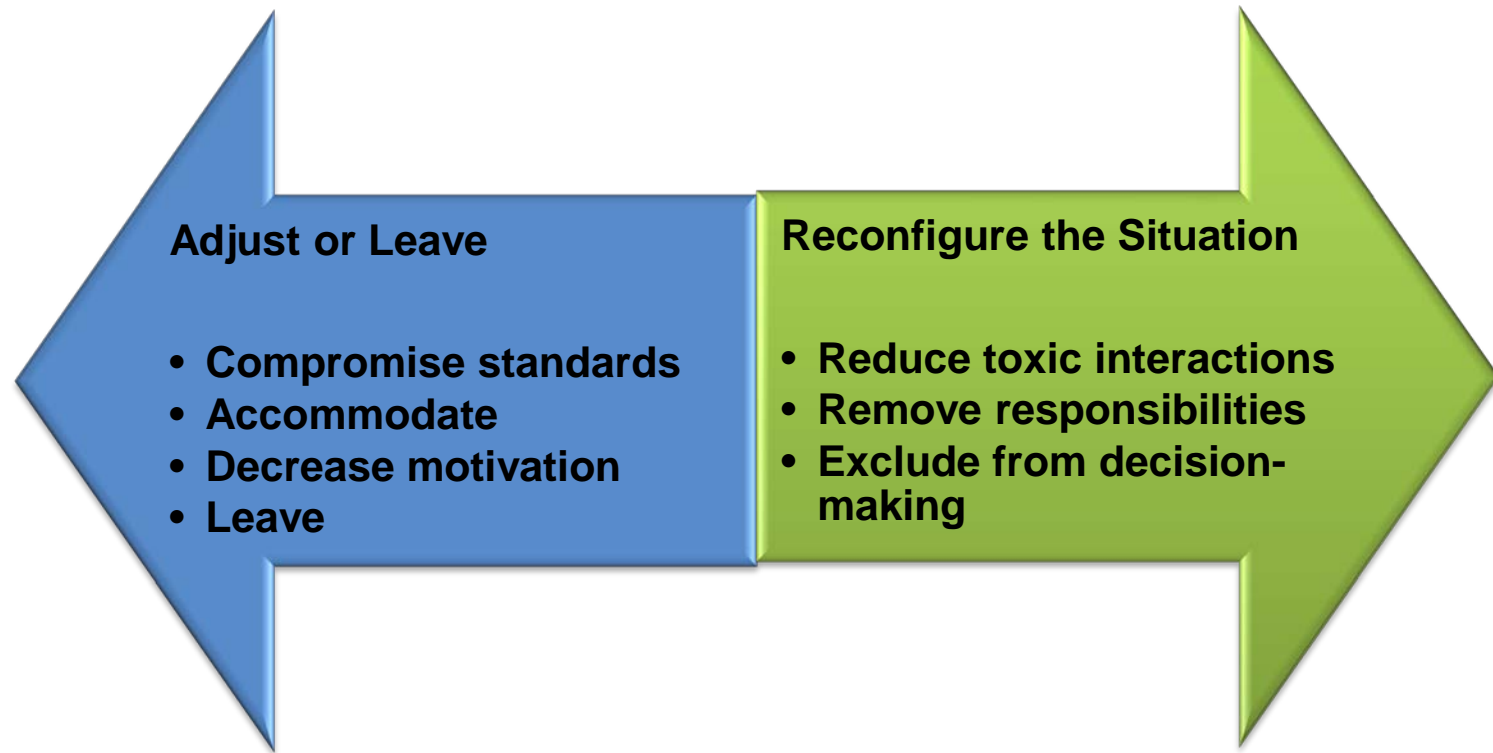


Passive aggression
Territorial behavior
Distrust of others' opinions
Difficulty with feedback
Clueless of own toxicity

Surveillance of team
Teamwork meddling
Authority to punish



Leaders' Reactions to Toxicity



In the
words of
our
leaders

*“Over the last two years
more than 10 people have
fled from this leader -
mostly by leaving.*

*His colleagues avoid him,
exclude him from
everything they can except
for when they must involve
him.”*



Mostly Unsuccessful Strategies

Formal Strategies

- Document to fire
- Engage HR professional
- Hire external consultant

Informal Strategies

- Avoid confrontation
- Stick to own agenda
- Engage in damage control
- Consult internally
- Manage negative impact

Feedback Strategies

- Negative effect on others
- Career effect
- Behaviors not tolerated
- Behaviors violate org culture
- Performance feedback

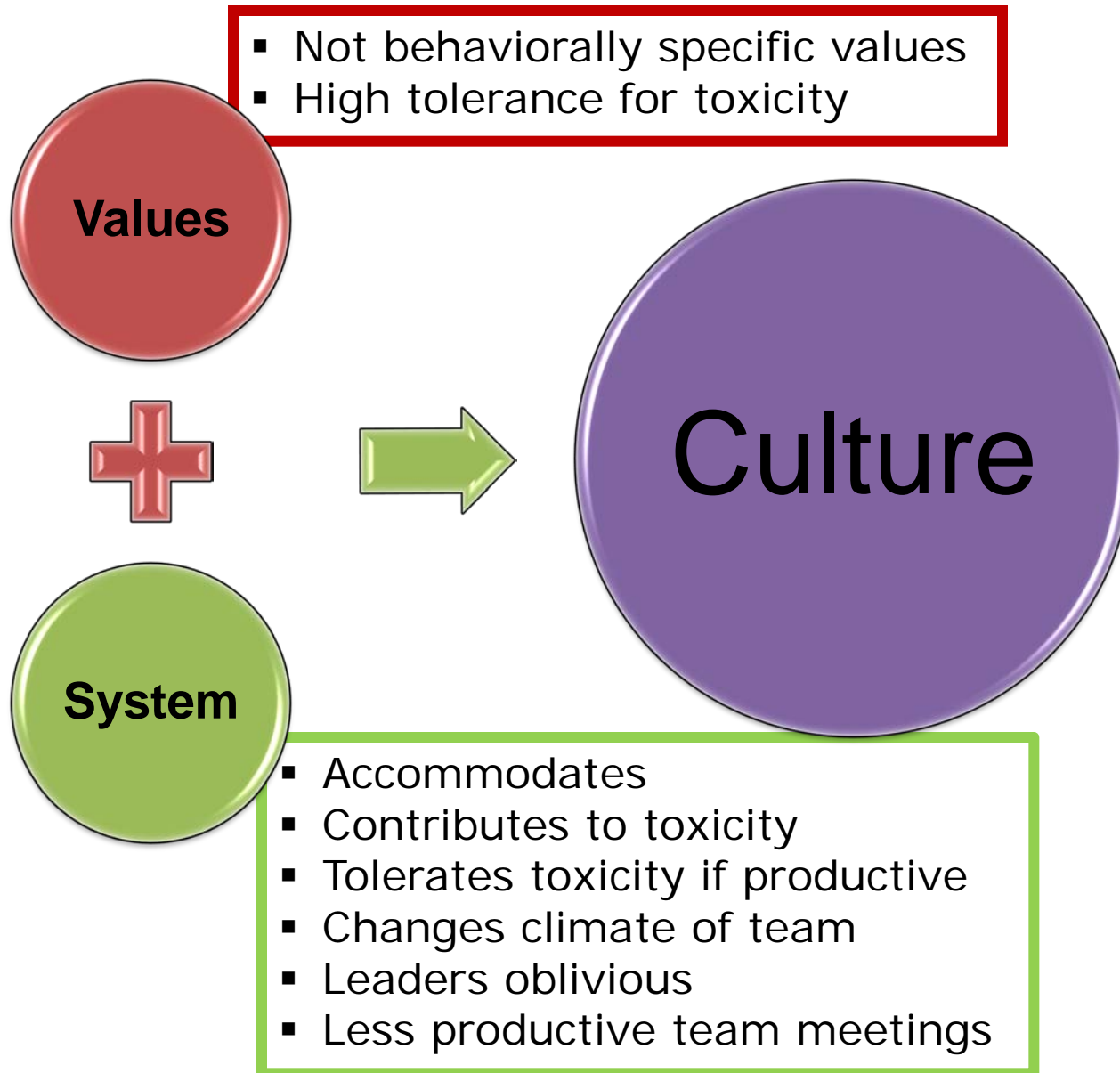


In the
words of
our
leaders

"We have invested tens of thousands of dollars, hundreds of hours of HR with no discernable results.

I have never encountered such profound and robust resistance to feedback!"





In the
words of
our
leaders

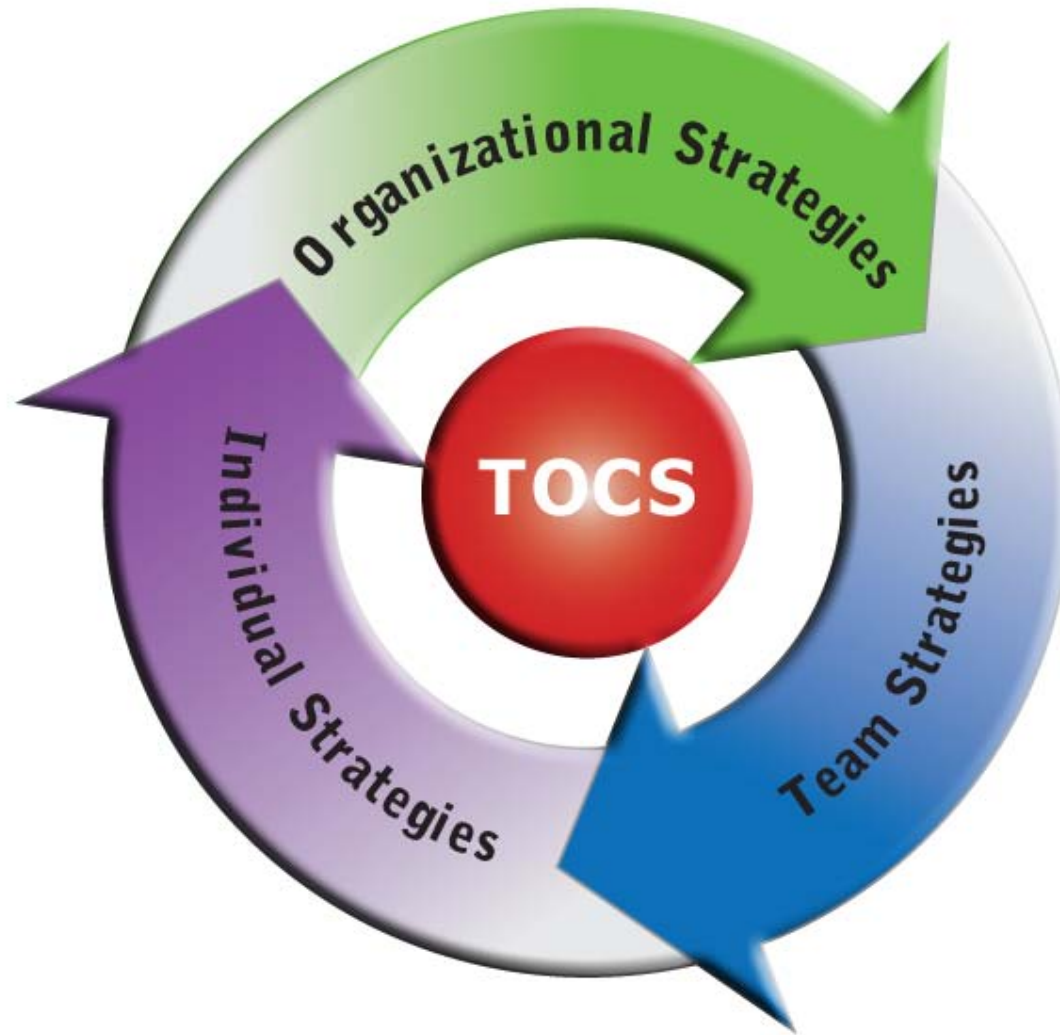
“While trying to survive, team members changed their personal behaviors - showing more stress, demonstrating some of same toxic behaviors with their own direct reports.”



9 Myths

- Don't mess with their success
- Give them feedback
- Most people won't put up with toxic behaviors
- HR and other consultants solve the problem
- Fire them to resolve the issue
- Toxic persons know exactly what they're doing
- Toxic behavior is a solo act
- When hiring, seek a little extra competence over a little more likeability
- Leaders see the systemic effects





Organizational Strategies:

- **Policy of respectful engagement**
- **Concrete rules**
 - No prima donnas
 - No pit bulls
 - No kissing up & kicking down
- **Values integration are core performance benchmarks in**
 - Performance Appraisal
 - Leadership Development
 - 360-degree Feedback
- **Skip-level Evaluations**

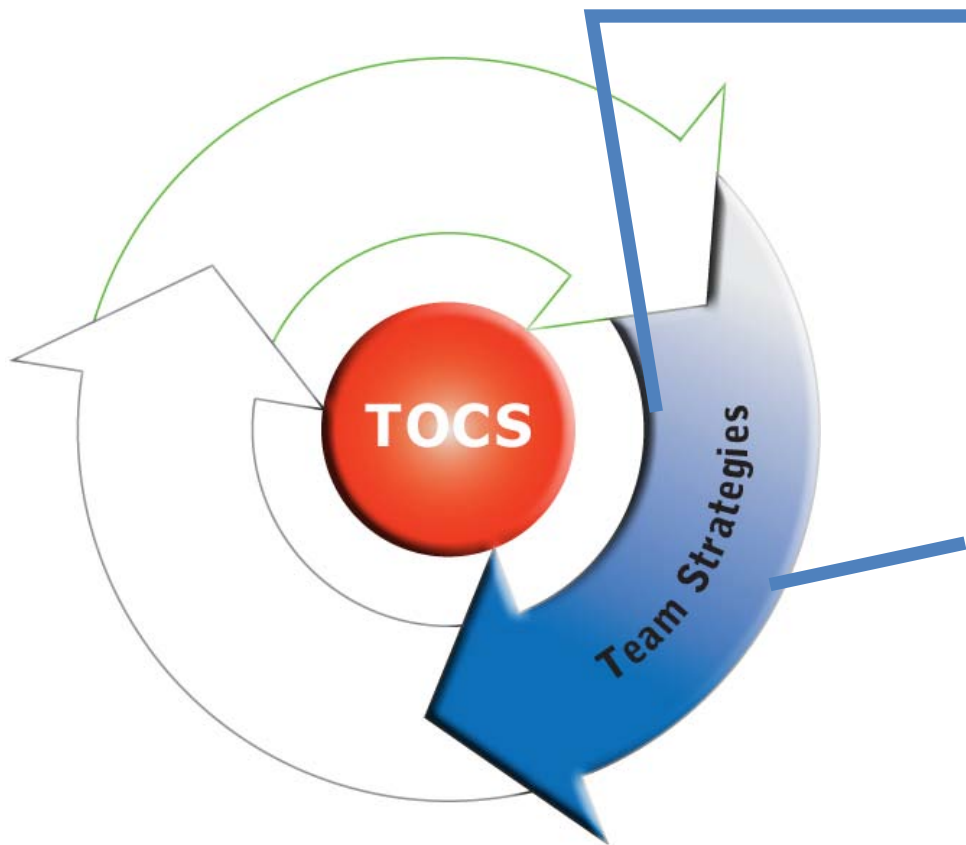


In the words of our leaders

***"If** you have values and if you enunciate those values and hold people accountable to them, then you can get rid of an aberrant personality.*

If you aren't clear about those things, then you don't have a legal right anymore to deal with it."





Proactive Team Strategies:

- Participative team member selection
- Values part of team norms
- Leader discusses team values
- 360-degree team assessment

Reactive Team Strategies:

- Exit interviews
- Identification of toxic protectors
- Identification of toxic buffers



Toxic Protectors

- *Special Relationship Protector*
- *Expertise Protector*
- *Productivity Protector*



In the
words of
our
leaders

"She gets away with these behaviors because she is the relative of a board member. She is barely competent and a tyrant, but everyone is afraid to challenge her authority even the VP over us. She has been here 16 years!"



In the
words of
our
leaders

*"He is quite a
high achiever
and is seen as
a 'star' to his
boss.*

*Yet, he has
the highest
turnover in his
staff."*



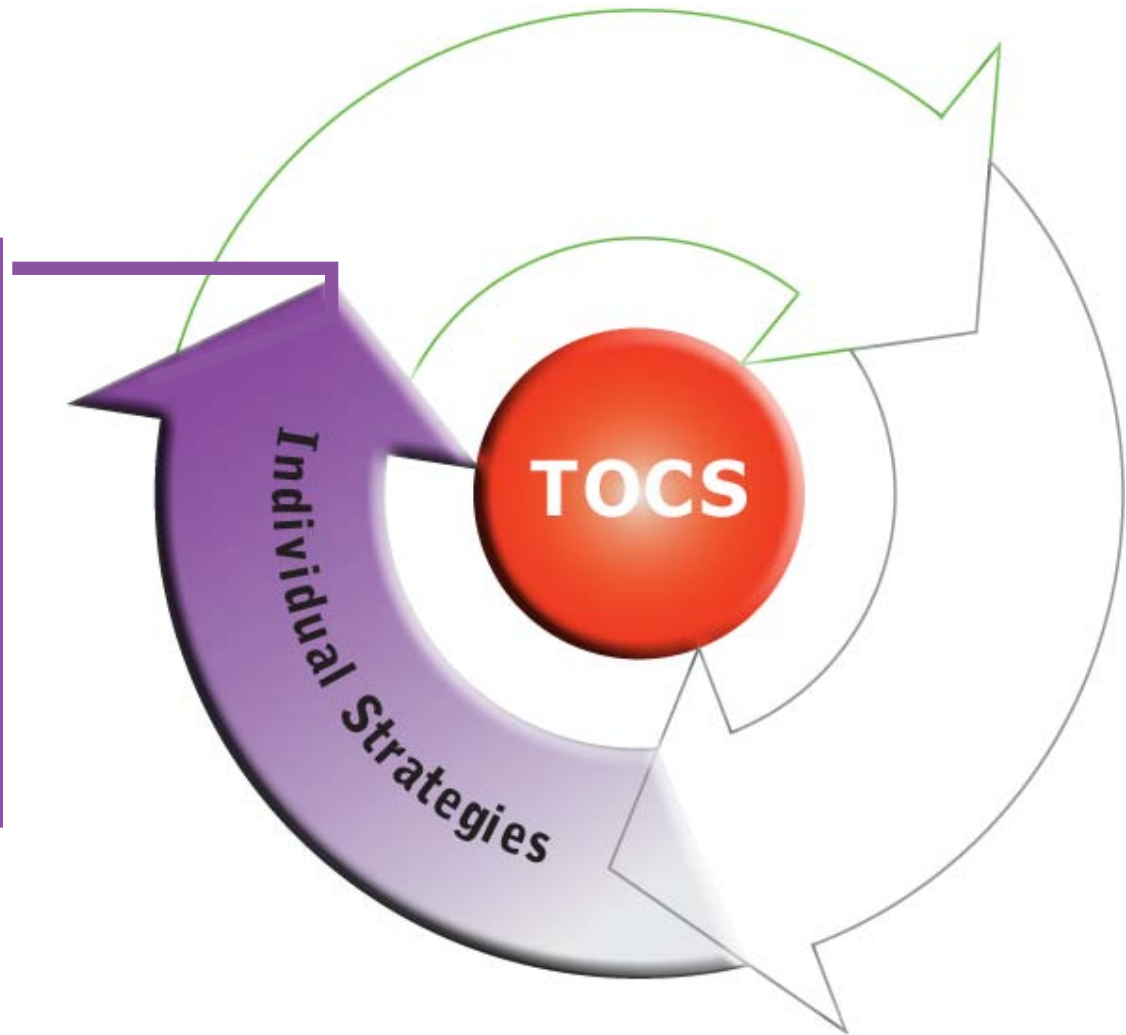
The Toxic Buffer

Persons who **shield** others
from the toxic person's venom

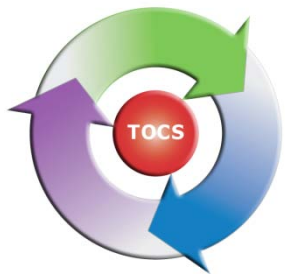


Individual Strategies:

- Performance Management with clear values having same weight as "real" work
- Coaching
- Termination



“Effective organizations have to know what’s best for the good of the whole team and can’t put the interests of one individual above that, or else the organization is going to break down over the long term.”



These findings are based on Kusy & Holloway's newest book, **Toxic Workplace! Managing Toxic Personalities and Their Systems of Power**, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, released April 2009.

