

TOXIC TALK

OBJECTIVES

- Define toxic talk
- Identify the three most common forms of toxic talk
- Recognize when their communication has turned toxic
- Respond proactively when others are engaged in toxic talk in the workplace

Toxic talk can be very damaging to an organization, the employees and organizational effectiveness. Toxic talk is any communication that becomes damaging to either the employees or the organization. The three most common types of toxic talk are:

- Gossip
- Gripes
- Rumors

GOSSIP

Gossip is conversation of a social nature that is personal, sensational and usually derogatory.

GRIPES

Gripes are complaints that are discussed with individuals who can do nothing to change or effect the situation or problem.

RUMORS

Rumors are bits of unverified information that circulate through the office grapevine. They are most common in environments that are confronted with uncertainty.

RECOGNIZING WHEN COMMUNICATION TURNS TOXIC

EXERCISE: Ask participants, "How do you know when your conversation has turned Toxic?" and "What do you think are the signs that you have crossed the line?"

Responses may include:

- *Is what I am about to say true?*
- *Is it harmless?*
- *How would I feel if the person I was discussing suddenly happened upon my conversation?*
 - *Would I be embarrassed?*
- *How would I feel if I saw my words quoted in tomorrow's newspaper?*
- *How am I going to feel later if I say this?*
- *Am I directing my comments to the right individual?*
- *Can this person do something about my concerns or am I just griping?*

DEALING WITH TOXIC TALK

EXERCISE: Ask participants what actions they can take the next time they are dealing with toxic talk and what they would say the next time they observe two employees having a toxic conversation?

Responses may include:

- *Telling the party or both parties to stop gossiping or spreading rumors.*
- *Tell the party to discuss their grip with the right person.*
- *Tell the party you don't want to hear it.*

POLICY

Discuss the county's policy on toxic talk or on professionalism.

CLOSING

- *Encourage discussion about toxic talk and how unprofessional and harmful it is in the workplace.*