

Dealing with Difficult People and Toxicity in the Workplace

Matthew R. Shupp
Ed.D., NCC, BC-TMH, ACS, LPC-
(PA), LCPC-(MD)

Professor, Department of Counselor
Education

Shippensburg University

The Front-Line Leadership
Credentialing Program

May 1, 2024

STAY AWAY FROM

TOXIC PEOPLE



Welcome
Back!

So nice
to see you
again

Adobe Stock | #272261834

What shall we do today?

Learners will be able to explicitly describe their operational definition of a “toxic colleague/culture.”

Learners will identify strategies to effectively work with these individuals in order to meet operational goals.

Learners will also be able to create healthy workplace boundaries, identify workplace supports (i.e. Human Resources), and understand the importance of documentation.





PollEv.com/matthewshupp525



What would you do???

Tyrell is a sergeant with a regional police force. He's recently been given the commanding post at a large urban branch. Tyrell has 15 years' experience in the police services with many of those years in management roles. However, the situation he finds at this branch surprises and baffles him. Morale among the officers is extremely low. Several officers are off on long-term stress leave. Serving a high crime area, the officers in this branch often face challenging calls that also receive substantial press coverage. However, Tyrell senses that the problems run deeper than work overload or negative media attention. He notices that some of the male officers are noticeably disrespectful of their female colleagues. He also senses a good deal of animosity among some officers. Two in particular won't even work on the same shift. With some digging around, he finds that one of the two officers in question has alleged harassment from another officer. Tyrell knows that the sergeant who previously had command of the branch took an autocratic approach to leadership and didn't get involved with interpersonal aspects of the workplace. Tyrell sees that his employees are suffering and wants to reach out to them and help improve the situation. He and his wife hosted a potluck for all the officers and staff at their home, but only a few showed up. Tyrell is not sure what to do. Imagine you work in the central office of the force as the HR officer with responsibility for implementing psychologically healthy workplace programs. What advice would you give to Tyrell?

What do we mean by “TOXIC?”

Toxic people can be:

- self-centered
- manipulative
- abusive
- lack empathy.

Toxic people drain others' energy by:

- constantly demanding attention, sympathy, or validation.

Toxic people tend to disrespect emotional and physical boundaries.

But it gets worse...

How to Spot
TOXIC EMPLOYEES
in the Workplace



types of toxic people

crazyheadcomics

THE NARCISSIST



only cares about themselves
lacks empathy
truly believes they are better than everyone around them

THE CONTROLLER



tries to control everything around them
needs to be in charge of every decision
makes you feel like you can't do anything right

THE DRAMA MAGNET



feeds off of gossip and drama
drama seems to "follow them" (they create it)
puts you in uncomfortable positions

THE ENERGY VAMPIRE



drains you of energy, overwhelms you
creates problems and feeds on the negativity
criticizes and bullies you

THE COMPULSIVE LIAR



tells white lies constantly
manipulates and gaslights you
master of guilt trips

THE GREEN EYED



cannot be happy for other people's good fortune
plays the victim
minimizes other people to feel better about themselves

Toodaloo...the
co-worker
who doesn't
respect
boundaries.






**WAIT
'TIL YOU
HEAR
THIS ONE**

Get this!

- Gallup's 2017 State of the Global Workplace report found that 67% of employees are “not engaged” and 18% are “actively disengaged” at work.
- Downsizing a workforce by 1% leads to a 31% increase in voluntary turnover the next year, research shows
- Studies show that when employees feel valued by their companies, they are more committed and satisfied in their jobs and show fewer signs of stress and burnout.

A person in a dark suit is walking away from the camera on a paved road. The road is flanked by green grass and a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**People don't leave
bad jobs, they leave
bad bosses.**

Can we fix this?!?! Why even bother?...

- Toxic work environments breed unrest, competition, low morale, constant stressors, negativity, sickness, high turnover, and even bullying. Even worse? Toxic workplaces rarely stay at work.
- They typically follow you home. They take over your conversations with loved ones, steal away much-needed sleep, and generally cause worry and stress.
- Toxic workplaces can lead to stress, burnout, depression, damage to your self-esteem, and serious disruptions in your normal life.



Can we fix this?

A. Yes! It takes all of us.

B. I'd like to think so, but it feels so beyond my reach.

C. I'm starting to lose hope, but am still hopeful.

D. No. Why even bother?
[When's lunch?]



The thing is, Bob, it's not that I'm lazy.
It's that I just don't care.



Toodaloo...the manager who doesn't respect boundaries.



TIME FOR
A BREAK!

Pause



E.

WHO IS THE ASSHOLE?

Simon Sinek



Performance vs. Trust

Strategien

Start
with
Self

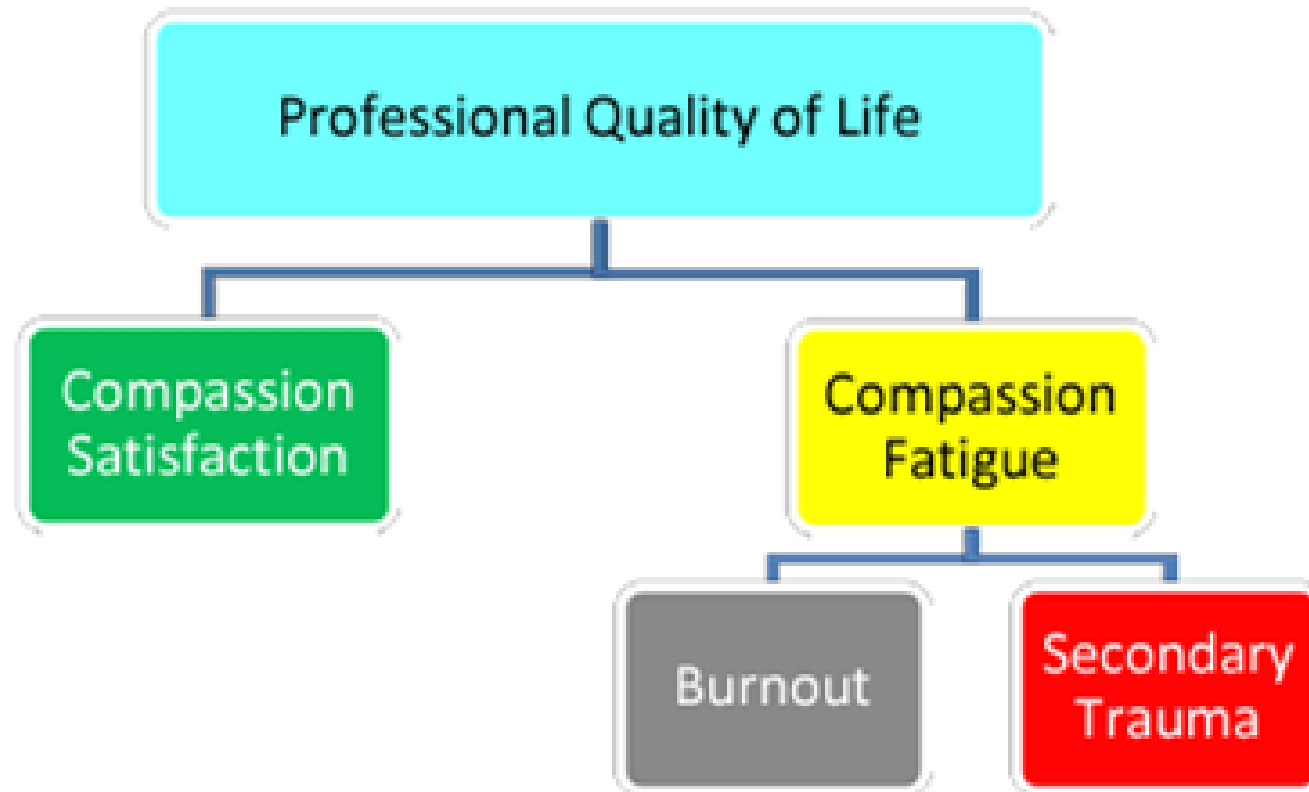
WORK

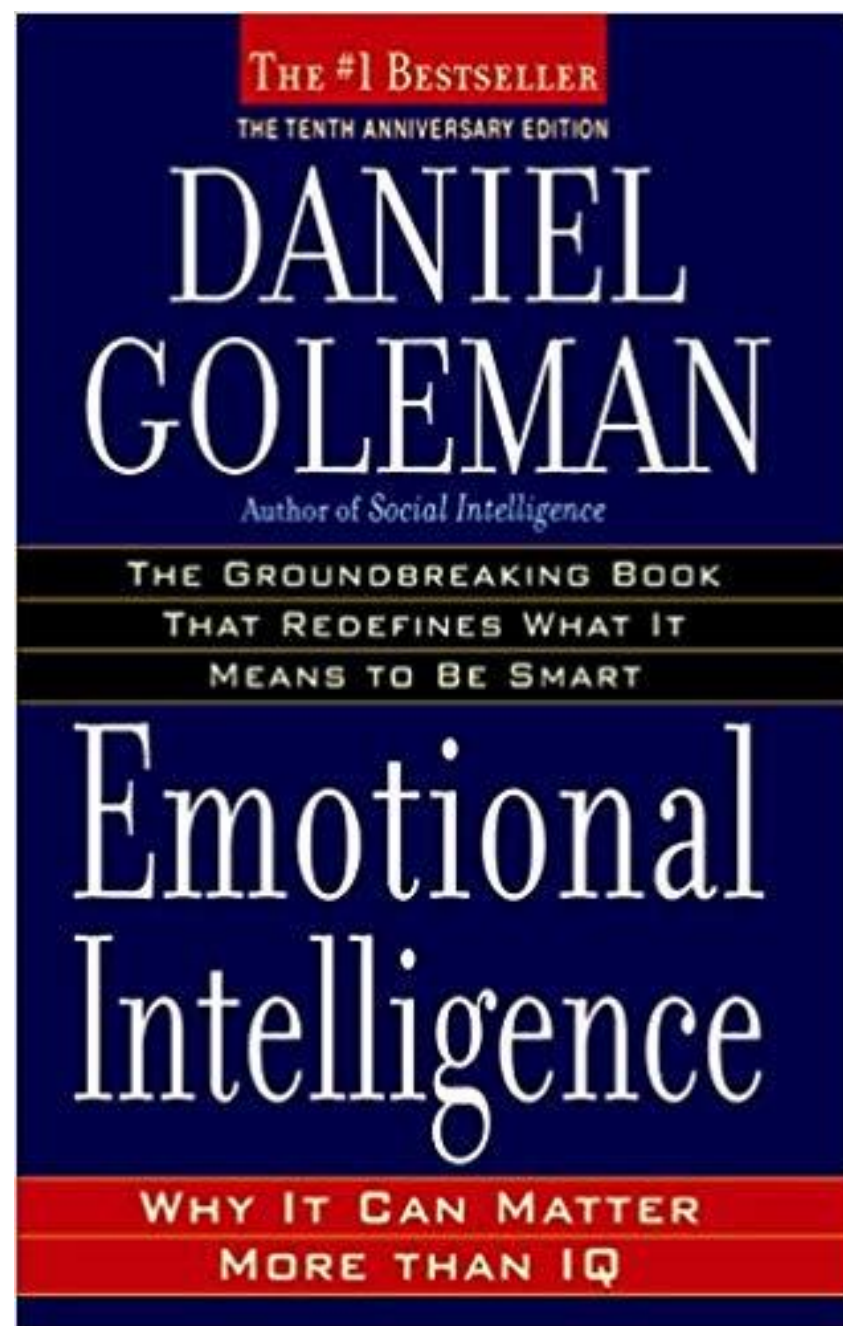
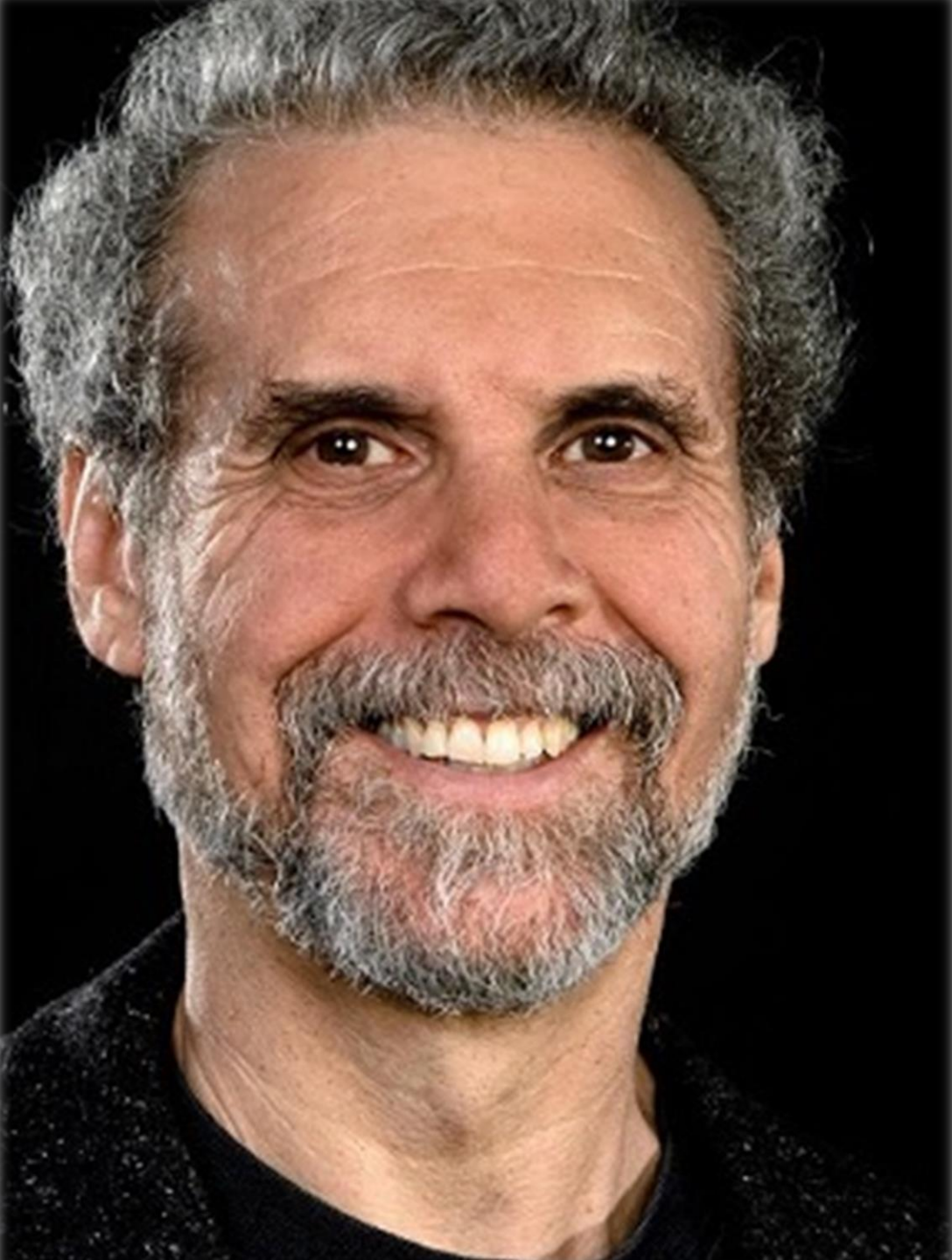
BALANCE

LIFE



Professional Quality of Life (proqol.org)





Daniel Goleman's (1995) Five Key Elements to EI

SELFF

Self-awareness ~ Self-regulation ~ Motivation ~ Empathy ~ Social skills

Build Resources

But first!



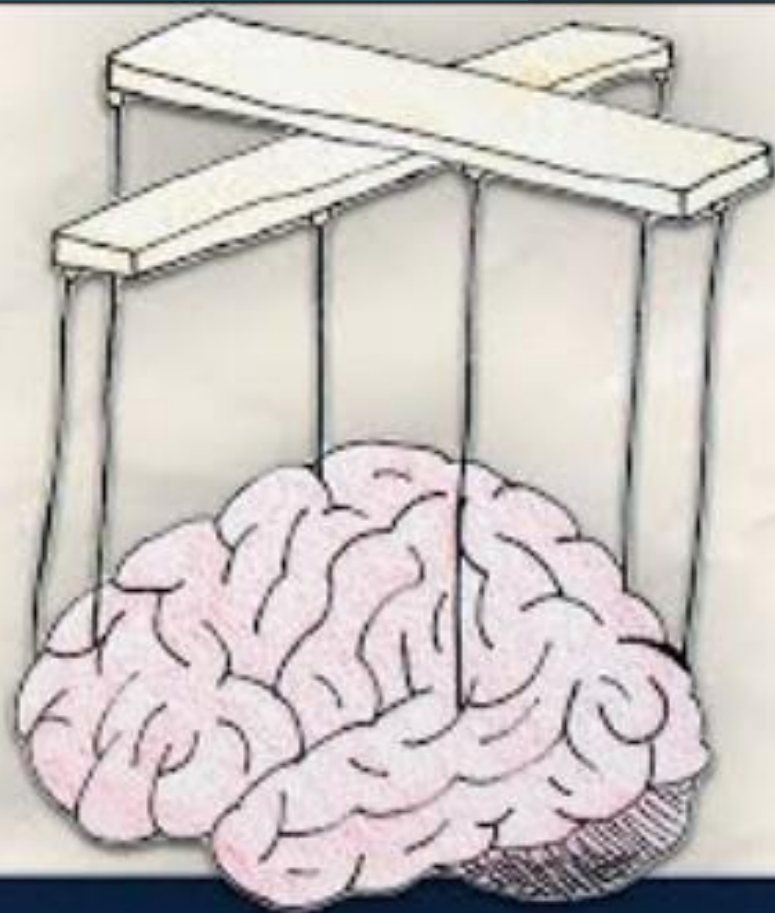
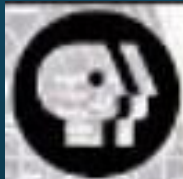
Created by Richard Wiseman

Shift your
perspective.



If you choose to engage,
seek clarification;
do not posture.

Roll with
resistance.



GASLIGHTING

Gray rocking (v.)

The act of being disengaged or unresponsive to set boundaries in communication with manipulative or narcissistic people.



Seek Out
Supports

Record Keeping and Documentation



If it's not written down,

...then it never happened.

Who was involved?

What happened?

Where did this occur?

When did this occur?

Why did this interaction take place?

How did you interact/engage?



Let's Talk!

Thank you!

Matthew R. Shupp
Mrshupp@ship.edu

