Toxic Work Environment in the ICU Workplace

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Opinion

Everyone happens to have a bad day at work, especially when it comes to a closed department and a stressful environment such as the ICU. It may be the fault of an unsuccessful medical procedure, a patient with a poor outcome, the traffic on the street, a dissatisfied relative patient or, more importantly, the poor cooperation of the department staff. Whatever it is that worries us, it is enough to make us lose our mood and not be able to wait until it is time to go home. But there is a difference between “having a bad day” and feeling sick at work every day. The first is a slight inconvenience, something that goes away and comes depending on the weather and conditions. The second, however, we feel is “poisoning” us internally and is a danger to our mental balance and our health. The reason for this is no other than a toxic work environment. An environment that is negatively charged, strongly affects us emotionally and makes us feel highly stressed and disgusted about our work, with the risk of not being effective with our patients.

It is not difficult to recognize if the environment in our work belongs to this category, as long as we see how the employees (medical and nursing staff) work with each other. If the atmosphere is constantly electrified, there are major communication problems, constant pressure and a complaint, and then something is wrong. It is important to stay away from toxic people and environments. Not only because they endanger our health, but also because they hold us back and do not allow us to evolve. You may think that it is a luxury to complain about one’s job at a difficult time. However, living an unbearable daily life, in a job with which you are intolerant, is not a solution and will quickly lead you to a dead end. That is why we have to think and see what goes through our hands and what we can do, to make this reality more bearable.

We have to find the Positives

To be able to deal with negativity, stress and madness in a bad work environment, we need to change a little the way we look at things. What we need to do is find the positives in every situation, so that we can focus there and get our attention from the negatives. If, for example, we are in an ICU which is a good opportunity to gain experience or an opportunity for a better position in the future, then we should think that this is a step that will help us climb higher.

We set our Limits

The truth is that setting the right boundaries is not easy. It is very easy to confuse assertive communication with aggressive communication. Especially in the workplace it is a challenge, as we have to keep a delicate balance. However, if we want to stay reasonable and keep our own mental health in balance, then we must be able to say no and set our limits correctly. Almost always, the problem with boundaries lies in beliefs. One is afraid to speak up and express
one's opposition and feelings. This is either because he thinks it makes no sense, as no one will care, or because he feels that if he does, disaster will come. However, passive behavior can only cause harm, and if we feel oppressed, it is our responsibility to civilly draw a fine red line. The more we do not, the more others will push our limits.

**To Learn to put our Limits on the Demanding Workplace of the ICU and to Survive even if we are in a Toxic Work Environment**

**We do not take part in fights**

A toxic work environment is a breeding ground for conflict, disagreement and, of course, intense drama. And in all this, it is very possible that we, even indirectly, get involved in such situations. Either trying to support one side, or wanting to change another’s opinion and show him that he is wrong.

Whatever has happened, all this drama adds intensity and charges us with even more negative emotions. So if we want to gain our composure, it is important to avoid conflicts as much as possible and of course not to participate in disagreements and quarrels between others.

**We must have a support system**

It is important, when we are constantly charged with strong emotions, to be able to get them out of us. To be able to do this, we need to be able to talk to family, friends and generally loved ones in our lives. That is, with people who constitute our so-called support network. This is a network of people who care about us and can listen to us and support us. These networks are an essential component of a balanced life.

It is good to avoid being open to people in our workplace because relationships and interests between colleagues change and we can become vulnerable by showing our weaknesses. Often, when they are absent, depression begins and they look for a way out of their problems in various activities that make them forget, but this is just a temporary escape from the problems.

**We must not pay attention to gossip**

Gossip and constant comments from other colleagues are a reality in all ICUs, but in any toxic work environment they have the first say in everyday life. Often, it is one of the parameters that can influence the thoughts we do and how we feel. Especially if gossip targets us and hurts us every day. However, all of these are often assumptions and products of fantasy. Unfortunately, we can not control what others do and say. But what we can control is ourselves and our reaction. So do not let the various stories and comments affect us. We need to stop thinking about what may or may not have happened and turn your gaze to reality and the data that exist.

**We need to make sure we are not part of the problem**

We may want to help a colleague in his work or emphasize specific problems. However, constantly correcting others or complaining all the time does not help much. Even if we have the best intentions, instead of helping to make things better and smoother, we make them actually worse. Unfortunately, if we are part of the problem, it is difficult to understand and deal with it, as one does not easily admit one's mistakes and guilt. However, if we want to change something and survive in a difficult and toxic work environment, we must first make sure that we do not contribute to the problem in our own way. Otherwise, it is very likely that negativity will follow us everywhere, even if we change ICU workplace.