

## Toxic workplaces increase depression risk by 300%

27th June, 2021



New research has revealed that toxic workplaces can be hazardous to mental health. The year-long study is from the University of South Australia. Researchers found that full-time workers who work for companies or organizations that do

not prioritise employees' mental health are three times more likely to suffer from depression. The researchers examined the adverse effect of "toxic" environments on health. Elements of a toxic workplace included poor management practices, bullying, and a failure to consider mental health issues. The researchers indicated that if employees are unhappy at work, mistreated or burnt out, their productivity will suffer and absenteeism will increase.

Lead researcher Dr Amy Zadow said mental health issues created in the workplace can be attributed to poor management practices and values. She said: "Evidence shows that companies who fail to reward or acknowledge their employees for hard work, impose unreasonable demands on workers, and do not give them autonomy are placing their staff at a much greater risk of depression." She added: "Bullying in a work unit can not only negatively affect the victim, but also the perpetrator....It is not uncommon for everyone in the same unit to experience burnout as a result." Depression affects over 260 million people worldwide and causes many people to take their own lives.

Sources: [bmj.com](http://bmj.com) / [metro.co.uk](http://metro.co.uk) / [iflscience.com](http://iflscience.com)

### Writing

Companies that have toxic workplaces should be heavily fined. Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

research / toxic / health / mental health / adverse / management / failure / suffer / workplace / values / companies / employees / autonomy / depression / worldwide

### True / False

- 1) The research is from the University of North Australia. T / F
- 2) Researchers said one in three companies do not prioritise mental health. T / F
- 3) Researchers said bullying is an aspect of a toxic workplace. T / F
- 4) Researchers said absenteeism will suffer and productivity will increase. T / F
- 5) A researcher said management practices are poor in all companies. T / F
- 6) Workers without autonomy are at greater risk of depression. T / F
- 7) The researcher says bullying also adversely affects the bully. T / F
- 8) Over 260 million people around the world are affected by depression. T / F

### Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                         |                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. <b>revealed</b>      | a. think about  |
| 2. <b>hazardous</b>     | b. principles   |
| 3. <b>adverse</b>       | c. efficiency   |
| 4. <b>consider</b>      | d. impacts      |
| 5. <b>productivity</b>  | e. perilous     |
| 6. <b>attributed to</b> | f. appreciate   |
| 7. <b>values</b>        | g. showed       |
| 8. <b>acknowledge</b>   | h. freedom      |
| 9. <b>autonomy</b>      | i. unfavourable |
| 10. <b>affects</b>      | j. put down to  |

### Discussion – Student A

- a) How can the workplace affect our health?
- b) What is your ideal workplace?
- c) What do you think of the places you have worked at?
- d) What responsibility do managers have to create a positive workplace?
- e) What can companies do to create a positive workspace?
- f) How do bad workplaces affect people?
- g) What companies are great places to work for?
- h) What can lead to burnout?

## Phrase Match

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1. toxic workplaces can be hazardous          | a. also the perpetrator      |
| 2. three times more likely to                 | b. people worldwide          |
| 3. poor management                            | c. absenteeism will increase |
| 4. mistreated or                              | d. as a result               |
| 5. productivity will suffer and               | e. practices                 |
| 6. impose unreasonable demands                | f. to mental health          |
| 7. staff at a much greater                    | g. on workers                |
| 8. not only negatively affect the victim, but | h. burnt out                 |
| 9. experience burnout                         | i. risk of depression        |
| 10. Depression affects over 260 million       | j. suffer from depression    |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Why are there poor management practices?
- How can companies stamp out bullying at work?
- Have you ever had a bad boss?
- What can workers do about toxic workplaces?
- What one thing creates a great workplace?
- What do you know about depression?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

## Spelling

- can be hasduozar to mental health
- more likely to suffer from eirdsnpose
- the deesvra effect of "toxic" environments
- The researchers anddcitei that
- their drctyopitvui will suffer
- ebseesimant will increase
- tduebtirat to poor management
- niceveed shows that
- reward or ndeaowkcegl their employees
- give them taomnoyu
- but also the oeretprtrpa
- experience butruno as a result

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. e	3. i	4. a	5. c
6. j	7. b	8. f	9. h	10. d

## Role Play

### Role A – The Boss

You think the boss is the most stressful aspect of working. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least stressful of these (and why): deadlines, colleagues or technology.

### Role B – Deadlines

You think deadlines are the most stressful aspect of working. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least stressful of these (and why): the boss, colleagues or technology.

### Role C – Colleagues

You think colleagues are the most stressful aspect of working. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least stressful of these (and why): deadlines, the boss or technology.

### Role D – Technology

You think technology is the most stressful aspect of working. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least stressful of these (and why): deadlines, colleagues or the boss.

## Speaking – Stress

Rank these with your partner. Put the most stressful things at work at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| • Boss       | • Customers  |
| • Deadlines  | • Overtime   |
| • Start time | • Colleagues |
| • Salary     | • Technology |

### Answers – True False

1 F	2 F	3 T	4 F	5 F	6 T	7 T	8 T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.