



The Dysfunctional Workplace Survival Guide

Published: Nov 4, 2015 on [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com)

Author: Daniel Stewart

We've all been there—

- Coming out of a meeting where you felt beat up but you never saw the punches coming.
- Watching someone win over a group of leaders with inspiring plans that actually only promote their own agenda.
- Sitting with co-workers and listening to elaborate conspiracy theories about why certain people haven't been fired yet (she knows what they did last summer!).

Yep, we've all had our 15 minutes up close and personal with dysfunction. And for many of us, it has lasted a lot longer than 15 minutes!

So, how do you survive a leader or environment that can get so dysfunctional and negative?

Here are 4 tips to help you survive a dysfunctional workplace:

Survival Tip 1: Priority Focus

1. FOCUS

It is easy to get sucked into a complaining fest and begin to view the world as “out to get you.”

No matter how uncertain or conspiracy-oriented others are, you don't have to go there! Don't get sidetracked into the endless streams of speculations and doubt. Focus on what matters to your customers and your team.

Focus on what matters to your career. Focus on what matters to your family. Focus on the real stuff. Ground yourself in the difference you can make each day and not the fleeting and often uninspiring comments of others.

Survival Tip 2: Don't Fight Back

2. DON'T FIGHT BACK

Much like pigs to mud, dysfunction loves extreme competition and conflict. The attitude is all about me, at the expense of the group. People who exhibit dysfunctional behavior can often love the heat of the battle, the thrill of adrenaline producing drama.

You need to resist the natural urge to fight back in every battle, even when every discussion or email is potential combat. The great leadership gem applies here:

You may need to lose a few battles to win the war.

You may get farther by letting them win. Be very selective when you engage in full combat – it is rarely worth it. Take the higher road and secure a stronger, more lasting victory.

Survival Tip 3: Your Support Team

3. SUPPORT

Feeling alone and picked on is never fun. I was recently watching the original Karate Kid with my son, a classic film.

The story is of a kid from New York who moves to LA and gets picked on the second he arrives. Luckily, he develops trusted relationships with his mom, girlfriend, and of course his coach/mentor Mr. Miyagi.

Through the course of the film, he relies on others to overcome his nemesis – the karate thugs at school. Who do you have at work that builds you up? What friends can you seek counsel from and who can mentor you in your hour of stress?

Build your support network. Reach out and have a trusted colleague at work, build interests outside of work, and strengthen relationship with family and friends.

Survival Tip 4: Look in the Mirror

4. REFLECT

At the end of the day, you need to be true to what matters most to you. Look at yourself in the mirror and make sure that you are not slowly losing what you stand for.

I remember a great cartoon in the New Yorker Magazine where the job candidate says to the hiring manager,

"I'm looking for a position where I can slowly lose my sense of self

...with benefits."

Identify what you value most and make sure your work environment can support that.

- Can you manage to remain true to your goals in the current workplace?
- Can you influence and change things enough so you can add value? If not, then don't sit around waiting for another paycheck and lose your sense of self. It is time to start planning and looking at other opportunities.

FINAL ADVICE

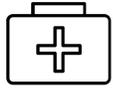
As dysfunctional behaviors occur in your workspace, resist, resist, resist! Don't give in. Stay true to the strengths that you have to offer.

We always have a choice as to how to we live as a leader. What choice would you like to make?

The Dysfunctional Workplace Survival Guide

by



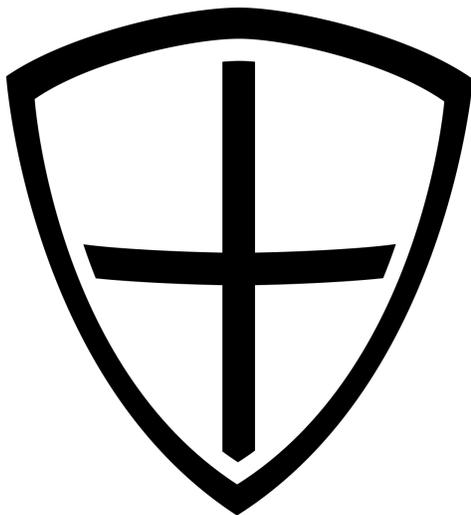


SURVIVAL TIP 1:
FOCUS
----- X



Focus on what matters to your customers and your team. Focus on what matters to your career. Focus on what matters to your family. Focus on the real stuff.

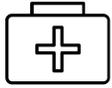
Ground yourself in the difference you can make each day and not the fleeting and often uninspiring comments of others.



SURVIVAL TIP 2: **DON'T FIGHT**
----- X

People who exhibit dysfunctional behavior can often love the heat of the battle, the thrill of adrenaline producing drama. Resist the natural urge to fight back. Be selective when you engage

in full combat – it is rarely worth it. Take the higher road and secure a stronger, more lasting victory.



SURVIVAL TIP 3: SUPPORT

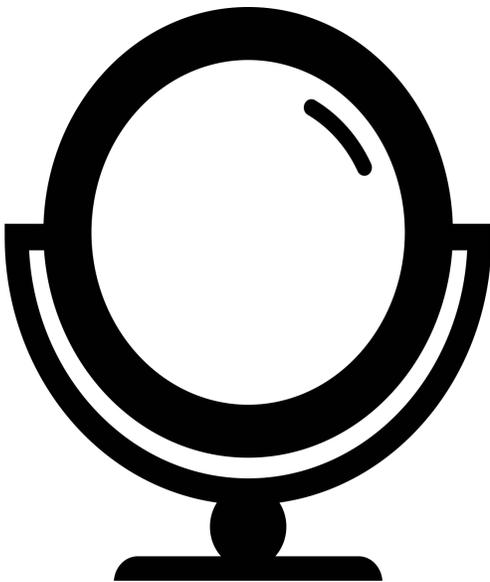
----- X

Who do you have at work that builds you up? What friends can you seek counsel from and who can mentor you in your hour of stress? Build your support network. Reach out and have a trusted colleague at work, build interests outside of work, and strengthen relationship with family and friends.



SURVIVAL TIP 4: REFLECT

----- X



At the end of the day, you need to be true to what matters most to you. Look at yourself in the mirror and make sure that you are not slowly losing what you stand for. Identify what you value most and make sure your work environment can support it.

For more leadership resources visit www.StewartLeadership.com

Copyright © Stewart Leadership. All Rights Reserved. www.stewartleadership.com