

Appendix E: Resources for Promoting Respect

Ideas for Responding to Disrespectful Behaviour

Using Standard Cues

Agree on a code word to use when (a) you are offended by something that is said, and (b) when you fear that you have offended someone. For instance, you might agree that anyone who feels offended or disrespected will simply say “**Ouch!**” to the offender. This is a cue for the offender to ask how the comment was interpreted, apologize if necessary and reach an agreement about how to avoid offending that person in the future. And when you slip and say something potentially offensive, you can say “**Oops!**” and retract or reframe your statement.

Example: A 50-something manager is inclined to use pop culture references from her younger days (“He was a real Archie Bunker”) and then say to the 20-something budget analyst, “Oh, I’m sorry – you’re too young to understand the reference.” This was really offensive to the young employee, and by saying, “Ouch!” the next time it happened, the manager realized they needed to talk and then determined not to do that again.

De-Escalation

When a co-worker is becoming agitated, loud or hostile:

- Assume a calm, firm stance – stand or sit tall, shoulders back, hands quiet, and give the person your full attention.
- Speak in a clear voice but calmly and at normal volume.
- Acknowledge feelings and paraphrase what the person is saying: “I can see that you are very upset about what just happened.”
- Do not interrupt or try to problem-solve until the person has calmed down. Just listen and reflect what you hear them saying. “It sounds like you expect the budget cuts to cause downsizing in your department.”
- Take care not to sound patronizing or sarcastic. The person should feel that you are genuinely listening to her/his perception of the situation.
- Once they are calmer, ask what they want to have happen and how they might go about seeking a solution.

Conflict Resolution Tools

Basic Mediation Paradigm

When two people are in conflict about an issue, it is usually because they are seeing the same situation in totally different ways:

Perceptions + Experiences + Priorities = Point of View #1

Perceptions + Experiences + Priorities = Point of View #2

Cooling-Off Method

When emotions are so charged that people aren’t willing to sit down together, try this:

1. Ask Person #1 to write a letter telling their story as completely as they can.
2. Deliver the letter to Person #2.
3. Ask Person #2 to respond in writing with their side of the story.
4. Deliver this response to Person #1.

Bring them together in private to discuss what each wants and what might satisfy their needs or resolve the problem.

Excerpt from RNAO *Managing and Mitigating Conflict in Health-care Teams* (Sept 2012), pages 83-84.

Informal Version

“Let’s try something. How about if we agree that each of you gives the other person a chance to explain, uninterrupted, what you think is going on here. Then we’ll try to agree on what the main areas of difference are and talk about those one at a time.”

Not only does conflict resolution (another name for Alternative Dispute Resolution) result in better solutions, it leaves both people feeling that they are respected and behaved respectfully. They have learned the wisdom of really listening to other people before making assumptions about them. It is likely that each honestly believes that their point of view is “correct” and the other person is “wrong.” The simple conflict resolution process has been widely used, from elementary school playgrounds to divorce mediation sessions, to help people in conflict listen to each other and work toward a resolution. A supervisor or even a co-worker can serve as the third party or mediator:

- Sit down with them together, in privacy.
- Lay out the ground rules: no interrupting, no name-calling.
- Let them decide who talks first.
- Person #1 tells their story until they are satisfied that the Person #2 understands it. The third-party may ask questions to clarify the story.
- When they are finished, the third-party summarize what they heard, without judgment.
- Then Person #2 tells their story, while #1 listens. Again, the third-party summarizes what they heard.
- Then look for common ground. The third-party asks each person what they want –often they just want an apology, an acknowledgement, or some type of compromise.

The third-party helps the two people make an agreement, within the bounds of what is allowed in the workplace.

Example: An off-site supervisor feels left out of key decisions because his service chief calls informal meetings on site and forgets to ask for his input or tell him what has transpired. The supervisor feels that the off-site person is “nosy” or just seeking attention. Once they sat down with a third person (a staff psychologist), the supervisor understood that his boss had a spontaneous operating style and was not intentionally ignoring him. And the boss learned that the off-site person had substantive ideas to offer. They agreed on a weekly call time when all supervisors would talk together about issues affecting them all.

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Promoting RESPECT in the Workplace

Recognize the inherent worth of all with whom you work.

Eliminate derogatory words and phrases from your vocabulary.

Speak with people – not at them – or about them.

Practise empathy. Walk awhile in others’ shoes.

Earn the respect of colleagues and co-workers through your behaviours.

Consider your impact on others before speaking and acting.

Treat everyone with dignity and courtesy.

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