

Respect & Civility at Work

Many behaviors commonly exhibited by employees can be detrimental to the well-being and productivity of coworkers. A lack of respect in the workplace, if left unchecked, will drag down morale, create higher turnover, and increase risks to the employer. Do you contribute to a respectful workplace?

What Signals Are You Sending?

Respect is the regard or consideration we have for others in all aspects of what concerns them—personal property, appearance, character traits, values, personal space, opinions, and emotional well-being. Disrespect toward others can negatively affect any of these things, so it is important to understand the role we play in maintaining a respectful workplace. Each of us has *personal power*, and with it, we affect others around us, whether we know it or not.

You have the Power

Your daily actions signal to others the level of personal respect that you hold for them. Understanding that *what you do matters* can increase your personal awareness and give you more control over the direct, indirect, or unspoken signals you send to others. It can lead you to make improvements in your relationships and increase your happiness at work. This awareness is the key to minimizing strife and hostility, and to increasing the courtesy and mutual respect all of us want from each other.

Big Impacts from Small Stuff

The following are some common behaviors often considered disrespectful. Do you practice any of them? Have you been on the receiving end of some? You may notice some missing that you have experienced. Use the list to help you consider your role in helping maintain a respectful workplace.

•**Communication:** Interrupting others while they are speaking; cutting someone off before he or she has finished expressing a thought; neglecting to say please and thank you; purposely avoiding an obvious moment to offer a compliment, to say good morning, etc.; criticizing someone in front of peers; using profanity to “be yourself” and making this other people’s problem if they don’t like it.

•**Privacy:** Asking personal questions of someone you do not know well; reading another person’s mail; peering at someone’s computer screen.

•**Boundaries:** Taking things from another person’s desk; not returning loaned books, supplies, or other property; standing too close or staring at another person; not stopping offensive behaviors after a reasonable request.

•**Environmental:** Not cleaning up after yourself in the staff kitchen; having a loud conversation or playing loud music; keeping your work area unsightly, overly dirty, or dusty; displaying visual objects in your workspace that offend others or contrast heavily with what most people consider good taste or appropriate; using the last of

something and not replacing it—food, supplies, toilet paper.

•**Differences:** Participating in intolerant behavior or using language associated with racial, sexual, age-related, or other human differences that offends or contributes to a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment.

•**Interpersonal:** Behaving in a way that invalidates someone else’s successes; spreading rumors, or not correcting rumors; talking about someone behind his or her back or taking credit for someone else’s work; criticizing a coworker’s character to another worker who has not formulated a firsthand opinion; labeling coworkers with personality or character traits you don’t like; habitually using cynical language or sarcasm; not sharing in the work.

•**Macro Issues:** Macro issues can be rhetorical and may not be directed specifically at one person. Espousing religious and political views that others may not want to hear; repeating catastrophic and “doomsday” predictions about the company, the country, the world, or geopolitical issues that maintain an atmosphere of anxiety for others.

Your Respectful Workplace

Being respectful of others isn’t about “censorship” or “walking on egg shells.” It’s about *awareness* so you can practice self-discipline—knowing the powerful impact we all have on each other and knowing that each person has a vital role in creating the type workplace that we all want to share.

