

The Importance of Respect in the Workplace

I was recently asked to come to one of our member companies and speak at the all-staff meeting on “Respecting Each Other in the Workplace.” The company was noticing that although for the most part their employees treat each other with respect, during stressful times (like many are having these days), some slip-ups were occurring. The training was responded to favorably, employees gave feedback that the information was a good reminder, and it personally reminded me to be ever watchful about my own behaviors with my coworkers and those I supervise.

I decided that the topic was important enough for one of our regular EAP articles in this newsletter. As an EAP professional, I firmly believe that mutual respect at work is an important building block of good teamwork. I am confident that as Human Resources professionals, you would agree. One of our widely distributed handouts entitled “Five Keys to Building Healthy Workplace Relationships” states : “It is nice, but not essential that all co-workers like each other. It is **crucial** however, that people treat each other with respect.”

Why is respect in the workplace vital? Well, if common sense alone doesn’t convince you, or remembering work settings where you have seen respect flourishing or where it is lacking, I invite you to Google search the topic. Respectful behaviors in the workplace affect employee loyalty and morale, team work and team cohesiveness, employees’ attitudes towards work, employee turnover, leadership effectiveness and even potential risk of liability to the employer.

So what is included in this important issue? It covers everything from respectful communication (good listening, direct and open feedback, regular praise, paying attention to non-verbal language, avoiding gossip) to privacy, to respecting differences (personality, gender, age, culture, values). Even respecting others’ time and personal property is included.

Remember – we all create our corporate mood. When you come in, greet your coworkers, make eye contact, smile, say hello out loud, say goodbye at the end of the day. Everybody needs acknowledgement. Look for opportunities to praise, out loud, often. On your way to

work, do a self inventory of your attitude. Leave behind your sour face, negative disposition, gloom and doom thinking, constant complaining, sullenness, avoidance, pouting, hysterics, stubborn resistance to change. Bring instead a positive disposition, optimistic outlook, openness to take on new challenges. Be grateful for your job – and let it show!

Be respectful of others' time. Whenever possible, be on time – don't make others wait for you. If you say you will call someone back by a certain day or time, make every effort to do so. If you need to talk with someone, ask if it is a good time for him/her first. Being sensitive to others' schedules and time limits shows respect.

Be respectful of other's property. Ask before borrowing. Return items where you got them – in a timely manner.

After all, don't you want this from YOUR coworkers? As is so often the case in life, following the "Golden Rule" (Do unto others as you would have others do unto you) is a good rule of thumb to stay on the respect tract.

So remember, everyone deserves and appreciates respect, your workplace will be better for it, and respecting others is good common sense. Like all healthy behaviors, being respectful takes practice. Most of us can continue to improve on this. But, if you get stuck, your EAP can help. Give us a call.

Tricia L. Branchaud, LMHP, CEAP

Directions EAP, LLC