

Giving & Getting Respect

Daily, it seems there are new headlines about sexual harassment. Many once-admired public figures have toppled from their perches one-by-one: politicians, actors, musicians, reporters, athletes and more. As a society, we're going through a cultural shift: people are speaking up and saying, "no more" to hurtful and disrespectful conduct that used to be overlooked or swept under the carpet. There's a new intolerance for hurtful behaviors and that is a good thing.

While most people agree that harassment is wrong, many are confused about what exactly it is or isn't. First, it's not always sexual in nature. Work harassment encompasses a wide range of damaging behaviors and unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age and disability.

One myth is that harassment is something that only managers can engage in. Not so. While managers must be particularly careful that they don't wield their authority in discriminatory or retaliatory ways, anyone in the workplace can be guilty of harassment. Think "bullying" or "discrimination."

Another myth is that behavior isn't harassing unless it breaks a law. Also, not so. Offensive conduct may include hurtful jokes, slurs, insults, name-calling, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, ridicule or mockery. It can also include offensive objects, pictures, emails or social media postings. It can be conduct that interferes with work performance.

It really all comes down to one simple word: respect. Many organizations have anti-harassment policies, but whether a work place is truly harassment-free, is not just up to management: It's up to every one of us to behave respectfully to our colleagues.



Here are a few ways to give and get respect:

- Practice the golden rule: treat others the way you would like to be treated.
- Embrace differences. Varied backgrounds create a creative, interesting work place.
- Don't tolerate bad behaviors or insults directed to others. Don't laugh at hurtful jokes or mockery.
- Be inclusive. Don't marginalize people.
- Don't gossip. Change the subject if someone else starts. Speak well of others.
- Practice the Grandmother rule: Would I be comfortable saying or showing this to my Grammy? If not, think twice!
- Don't sweat the small stuff. Give people the benefit of the doubt. Shrug off petty annoyances. Don't nurture grudges.
- Treat people fairly and equally.
- Be kind, helpful, generous and positive.
- Dole out appreciation, compliments and credit. Sincere thanks can go a long way.

Login to your EAP for online training in workplace discrimination and harassment. Learn more about what harassment is and how to avoid inadvertently engaging in hurtful or discriminatory behaviors. Remember that 365 days a year 24-7, your EAP can help - just pick up the phone and give us a call.