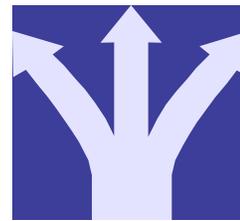


OUTLOOK ASSOCIATES of New England (Previously Recovery Strategies)



Volume 1, Issue 1

March, 2001

WORKPLACE ANGER: JUST BUSINESS AS USUAL OR TIME FOR A CHANGE?

- On December 26, 2000 (*What was the person's name*) killed seven people at his workplace in Wakefield, MA
- The latest statistics from the Bureau of Labor reports the following incidents of workplace violence:
 - ⇒ 1.5 million simple assaults
 - ⇒ 396,000 aggravated assaults
 - ⇒ 51,000 rapes and sexual assaults
 - ⇒ 84,000 robberies
 - ⇒ 709 homicides
- According to a 1996 Gallup nationwide telephone survey nearly 25% of respondents who were employed full- or part-time indicated that they were “generally at least somewhat angry at work.”

Is workplace anger really more prevalent or has awareness about the issue increased so we notice it more like other types of “taboo” issues such as domestic abuse and sexual abuse of children? The answer may be somewhere in between.

There has been a drop in the number of work-related homicides from 856 in 1997 to 709 in 1998. While the mass killing that occurred in Wakefield was horrifying, those types of incidents are still very rare in the workplace.

Yet, if the Gallup Poll is correct there appears to be a great deal of underlying negative feelings in the workplace. There may be a number of reasons for this phenomenon:

- ◆ *Little loyalty between employers and employees*- The unspoken agreement of the past that indefinitely committed company management and employees to one another is rare. In the current work environment, it has been replaced with a I-need-to-take-care-of-myself-because-no-one-else-will philosophy. Employers find themselves more focused on the need to be competitive.
- ◆ *Corporation Restructuring*- Downsizing resizing, rightsizing, mergers (the leaner and meaner look)- performed with little notice have resulted in an incredible number of workers who have been terminated, displaced or reduced in employment status.
- ◆ *Unremitting Workplace Stress*- Unclear performance expectations, rudeness among co-workers, poor communication between supervisors and their staff, ahaving to cope with constant change are all factors that lead to stressful and difficult places to work.

[First of two articles on Workplace Anger]

(Some material for this column was taken from “Anger in the Workplace” by R. Brayton Bowen)

Working Assumptions for the Outlook Associates of New England Anger Management Treatment Program

The Recovery Strategies' Anger Management Program is based on certain principles taken from the work of Jo Clancy and Dr. James Gilligan (see bibliography) that are a guide to how we offer services to individuals:

1. Aggression Has an Identifiable Relapse Cycle:

Aggression is cyclical in nature. As tension increases, a cycle of reaction-frustration-reaction occurs, exacerbating levels of distress. Episodes of anger dyscontrol occur with increasing frequency as individuals attempt to diminish unpleasant reactions. Tension continues to escalate unless the cycle is interrupted.

2. Past Experiences Influence Current Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviors:

There is an association between messages an individual received from primary role models during childhood and the power these messages had, and continue to exert, in defining an individual's frame of reference for viewing life experience.

3. Shame and Low Self Esteem Are Always Present-

When individuals feel disrespected or put down in some way they are more likely to act in an aggressive manner as a way to obtain some sense of power. However, the aggressive behavior re-enforces a feeling of inadequacy.

4. Non-Confrontational Approach, Roll with the Resistance:

A faulty set of perceptions about events and other people and a lack of consequences for existing unproductive responses seriously affect a person's motivation to change. Rather than addressing this lack of motivation in a confrontational manner, the program asks individuals to consider different strategies in their approach to dealing with anger.

A Recommended Bibliography to Learn More about Anger

Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion.

Author: C. Tavris. Simon and Schuster (1982)

Anger and Addiction, Breaking the Relapse Cycle.

Author: J. Clancy. Psychosocial Press (1996)

Letting Go of Anger: The 10 Most Common Anger Styles and What to Do about Them.

Authors: R. Potter-Effron. & P. Potter-Effron. Harbinger Publications, Inc (1991)

Violence: Our Deadly Epidemic and Its Causes.

Author: J. Gilligan. Grosset/Putnam (1996).

Recovery Strategies Has A New Name

Recovery Strategies has changed its name to Outlook Associates of New England to reflect the other services that we are providing in addition to our established anger management program. These other services include:

- ◆ Training and consultation for companies/agencies in a number of different areas including communication skills, stress management and supervising the difficult employee;
- ◆ Personal coaching to assist individuals to make better decisions about professional/personal goals;
- ◆ Adolescent anger management program;
- ◆ Substance abuse treatment that includes relapse prevention and motivational enhancement therapy.

How to Contact Us

We would like to hear from you about our newsletter or please contact us to learn more about our services.

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