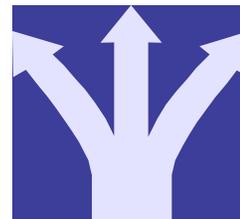


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WORKPLACE ANGER: JUST BUSINESS AS USUAL OR TIME FOR A CHANGE? (Part II)

As noted in our last newsletter, anger in the workplace is caused by a number of factors such as decreasing loyalty between employers and employees, corporate restructuring and unremitting workplace stress. While workplace anger can result in a sudden violent act, the anger is usually manifested over a longer period of time. For example, according to the Workplace Violence Research Institute 16,400 threats are made daily in the workplace. In addition, 25% of victims of workplace violence ignored warning signs, according to a recent study by the American Management Association.

As aggressive behavior becomes more common and more dangerous, employees want to be assured that their company is taking effective measures to protect them against aggressive and potentially violent employees. It is therefore important for companies to address the problem of workplace anger as a way of minimizing the risk of violence as well as a means to increase employee morale and retention.

In January 2001, Michael Rosen, an attorney for the law firm Foley, Hoag & Eliot wrote an article in *The Boston Globe* about how to stop workplace violence. The article was written in the aftermath of the shooting in Wakefield, MA that had occurred the previous month. Mr. Rosen identified a number of measures that companies can take to reduce the possibilities of violence. These steps included:

- ◆ *Develop Prevention Policies*— Companies can develop and enforce policies that prohibit violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, and weapon possession. These policies should be in writing and made known to all employees.
- ◆ *Provide Training to Employees, Particularly Managers*— Mr. Rosen recommended trainings such as how to recognize warning signs of violence and how to defuse potentially violent situations. Other trainings to consider include how to supervise the difficult employee and how to manage stress in the workplace.
- ◆ *Use of Employee Assistance Programs*— It may be appropriate for employers to require that an employee be evaluated and/or counseled by a mental health professional. Any referrals must be handled with sensitivity and confidentiality.
- ◆ *Screening of Applicants*— While in the process of hiring, companies can conduct careful background checks that are in compliance with current laws.
- ◆ *Need for Security*— Companies can limit access to buildings and provide security guards. If there is concern about threat, surveillance can be considered.

In our next newsletter, we'll take a closer look at how managers can adopt strategies and specific techniques to manage an angry employee.

Definition of Terms in the Outlook Associates Anger Management Program

In our 12-week psycho-educational anger management program, we provide several definitions to help clients gain a better understanding of the issues they are addressing:

Anger— a normal natural human emotion.

Aggression— a behavior that is harmful to self, others or the environment.

Assertiveness— expressing your feelings, needs and wants in a manner that does not harm oneself, others or the environment.

Reaction— A group of involuntary physical changes which include:

- Increased Blood Pressure
- Increased Heart Rate
- Increased Rate of Breathing
(short, shallow breaths)
- Increased Blood Flow to the Muscles
- Increased Muscle Tension
- Increased Perspiration

These changes are known as the FIGHT OR FLIGHT SYNDROME and happen automatically to prepare us to respond to conflict.

Response— an individual choice that is consciously made after initial reactions have occurred.

Defensive Aggression— based on a conscious thought process that a person uses to assess options before selecting a response. Serves the purpose of self-preservation. Becomes problematic when incoming information is misinterpreted and a feeling of threat is experienced without the presence of danger.

Irritable Aggression— generated by some offensive but not life-threatening event that interferes with some aspect of daily functioning. Serves no useful purpose. It negatively affects a person's behavior, emotions, sensations, thinking and self esteem.

It's Not Your Grandparents' Sports Team Anymore

The following is a list of assaults against umpires and referees compiled by the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO):

Rockford, IL: A veteran soccer official was spit upon by a parent at the U17 Illinois Cup Game. The official looked at the parent and said, "I assume that was accidental," and the parent spit again.

Sacramento, CA: During a youth football game, a coach pushed the referee to the ground and kicked him several times in the groin area while shocked players and fans looked on. The referee had asked the coach to speak with a player who had displayed unsportsmanlike behavior during the previous play.

Omaha, NE: The mothers of two six and seven year-old soccer players were fined for shoving and verbally abusing a 13 year-old referee.

(Taken from Harper's Magazine September 1999)

Low Social Support and Anger Increase Risk of Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) Progression

According to the November 2000 issue of the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, patients with coronary heart disease that had low levels of social support and outwardly expressed anger were at increased risk for progression of the

OUTLOOK ASSOCIATES HAS A WEBSITE

To provide individuals with another means to access information about our services, Outlook Associates of New England has developed a website that includes information about our anger management program, as well as the workshops and individual consultations we provide to corporations and agencies. Please visit us at **www.outlookassociates.com**. Of course you can also contact us the old-fashioned way by mail, phone number or fax at:

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