Tip Sheet: Workplace Civility

Like it or not, the workplace is often a reflection of society at large. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to see a variety of behaviors that demonstrate a lack of respect and civility, both inside and outside the workplace. Numerous studies and polls indicate that Americans view incivility as a serious problem that is getting worse. One study found that 60% of employees believe that co-workers’ behaviors negatively impact the workplace and, as a result, 40% reported that they are looking for new employment. These and other findings clearly illustrate that disrespectful behaviors in the workplace can negatively impact any organization.

Fortunately, if employees develop an awareness of respectful behaviors and necessary workplace civility skills, they can serve as role models for their coworkers, and respectful behaviors will spread in the workplace and beyond. The following are basic tips to assist you in increasing your level of workplace civility:

- Before you act, always consider the impact of your words and actions on others.
- Strive to create an inclusive work environment. Recognizing and respecting individual differences and qualities can help your organization realize its full potential.
- Closely self-monitor the level of respect that you display in all areas of your communication, including verbal, body language, and listening.
- Understand your triggers or “hot buttons.” Being aware of what makes you angry and frustrated enables you to manage your reactions and respond in a more appropriate manner.
- Take responsibility for your actions and practice self-restraint and anger management skills in responding to potential conflicts. If you know you have a problem with anger management, get help. Your EAP can assist you.
- Adopt a calm, positive and solution-driven approach in resolving all conflicts.
- Always rely on facts rather than assumptions. Gather relevant facts, especially before acting on assumptions that can damage relationships. Do not participate in gossip or spread rumors.
- When making a decision, always consider the needs of others. This will help you avoid the perception that you view yourself as the “center of the universe.”
- Don’t over-react. Try to view each difficult situation from a broader (big picture) and more realistic perspective by considering what it means in the overall scheme of things.
- Act in a manner whereby you respect yourself, demonstrate respect for others, and take advantage of every opportunity to be proactive in promoting civility and respect in your workplace.

Employees who follow these tips can become bridge-builders – role models for civility and respect – both within and outside the workplace.