



Let's Talk . . . Respect — It Matters Leader's Guide

Overview:

Being valued and supported in a respectful and professional workplace allows us, as individuals and organizations, to thrive and to reach our potential. Conversely, a disrespectful unprofessional environment can have the opposite effect, with negative practical consequences from absenteeism to lawsuits.

Let's Talk . . . Respect—It Matters training program is a stand-alone program, which works well in conjunction with the other programs in the Let's Talk series, Bullying, Abusive Conduct, and Their Consequences and Harassment—It Happens. It can also be used to fine-tune other, more general, Harassment and Diversity programs.

Prepare for the Session:

- Preview the *Let's Talk . . . Respect—It Matters* program, and consider the topic in the context of your organization.
- Read through the Leader's Guide.
- Make sure you have a Discussion Question handout for each participant.
- Remember to use a matter-of-fact, nonjudgmental tone of voice when discussing sensitive concepts.
- Greet participants in a friendly manner.

Open the Session:

- Introduce yourself and welcome the participants to the training session.
- Introduce the *Let's Talk . . . Respect—It Matters* program, explaining that its topic is applicable to individuals at all levels of the organization.
- Ask participants as they watch the program to think about the topic in terms of their personal experience and observation.
- Let participants know that there will be a short discussion portion of the program, with an opportunity to comment and/or ask questions.

Present the Material:

- Show the *Let's Talk . . . Respect—It Matters* program (running time: 9 minutes).
- Review definitions and learning points for key concepts as follows:

Respect Equals Professionalism

Definition: Respectful behavior is behavior that is professional. In other words, it is behavior that is appropriate in a workplace context. It is polite, acknowledges other people's boundaries, and takes other points of view into account. It is behavior appropriate in any organization, no matter its culture.

Learning Points:

There are three touchstones, or guidelines, to help us determine whether specific behavior is respectful:

❖ **Professionalism**

Professional (that is, appropriate) behavior for a workplace environment is respectful behavior.

❖ **Organization policy**

While expectations for behavior vary somewhat depending on the culture of an organization, organization policy offers guidelines as to what is considered professional behavior in any particular workplace.

❖ **The law**

Behavior that is illegal under federal and/or state law—that is, behavior resulting in harassment and discrimination—is especially disrespectful and unprofessional.

Disrespect: What Does It Look Like?

Examples of disrespectful and unprofessional behavior include:

- ❖ Telling hurtful jokes that include gender or racial stereotypes;
- ❖ Engaging in unwelcome physical contact such as hugging, back rubs, or intentionally brushing up against someone;
- ❖ Sending inappropriate e-mails or text messages, such as those containing insulting humor or sexual content;
- ❖ Cyber-bullying on social networking sites;
- ❖ Gossiping or spreading rumors;
- ❖ Displaying derogatory pictures or cartoons in the workplace;

- ❖ Ridiculing others for their appearance, beliefs, or abilities;
- ❖ Bullying, abusive conduct, or physical intimidation;
- ❖ Using crude or obscene gestures and/or language;
- ❖ Put-downs, name-calling, or even the regular use of demeaning terms of endearment.

It is unprofessional, and disrespectful, to joke about, or even offer an opinion on, someone's personal characteristics—that is, on such things as their ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, political affiliation, gender, or different physical characteristics or mental abilities.

Not only can these topics be emotionally loaded, inappropriately focusing on personal traits is at best impolite. And at worst, it can be discriminatory and harassing behavior that is actually illegal.

Stereotyping is disrespectful. It does not allow people to be seen as the distinctive individuals they are.

A Respectful Workplace: What Does It Look Like?

A respectful workplace is inclusive, friendly, and collaborative. It's a place where individuals are valued and validated, where they're listened to, and where their contributions are affirmed.

Learning Points:

Simple expressions of respect include:

- ❖ **Making eye contact.**

Eye contact is a form of acknowledgment.

- ❖ **Using a person's name.**

Using someone's name is recognizing that person as an individual.

❖ **Asking for other people's input.**

Asking for someone's input says that you value his or her opinion.

❖ **Thanking people for their contributions.**

Thanking people for their contributions is just polite.

❖ **Including people socially.**

Being socially inclusive in a professional context reinforces the idea that we are a team, something we all have in common.

Remember the old adage: Courtesy is contagious.

We can embrace our diversity, reinforce our commonality, and learn from each other when we listen to and respect one another.

If we do make a mistake and inadvertently cause offense to others, we should listen to their concerns, and apologize.

Start Discussion:

- Distribute the Discussion Questions handout.
- Read the 4 questions on the Discussion Questions handout to participants, and explain that they will have 5–8 minutes for discussion based on the questions.
- Ask participants to take the handout Quiz.
- Remind participants of the importance of using respectful language and tone of voice when discussing such sensitive issues.
- Have participants form small groups of 3–5 people for the discussion portion of the training.

Discussion Questions:

Can you identify disrespectful or unprofessional behavior you or a coworker witnessed or participated in?

Sample answers:

- 1. I tease a coworker about her weight gain.*
- 2. Some of my coworkers tell homophobic jokes.*
- 3. I work so hard, but my manager has never even said thank you.*

What might be a practical consequence of this action for the target/s?

Sample answers:

- 1. My teasing might have made my coworker feel embarrassed and self-conscious.*
- 2. The jokes make most of us uncomfortable, especially the gay people in the organization, who feel angry and offended.*
- 3. I feel completely unappreciated.*

What might be a practical consequence of this action for the organization?

Sample answers:

- 1. The target of the teasing might be uncomfortable and distracted at work. She may even feel like quitting.*
- 2. Our gay coworkers may not want to come to work for fear of being subjected to inappropriate "humor."*
- 3. I don't want to do more than the minimum for my manager any more.*

What might be an appropriate response to the behavior?

Sample answers:

- 1. Tell your colleague that the teasing is hurtful and inappropriate, and ask that it stop.*
- 2. Calmly let the perpetrators know that their actions are disrespectful and unprofessional and ask them to stop. If they don't, talk to HR.*

3. *Matter-of-factly let your manager know that you would appreciate an occasional acknowledgment of your hard work.*

PREVIEW

Quiz Answer Key

1. Professional behavior is defined in exactly the same way in different organizations.

TRUE/FALSE

2. Commenting on personal attributes, such as on another person's sexual orientation, is disrespectful.

TRUE/FALSE

3. It is important for supervisors to treat their subordinates respectfully.

TRUE/FALSE

4. It is unprofessional to thank a coworker for his or her hard work.

TRUE/FALSE

5. Positive stereotyping is respectful.

TRUE/FALSE

6. Disrespectful behavior can not result in lawsuits.

TRUE/FALSE

7. Being professional means acting appropriately in the workplace.

TRUE/FALSE

8. A respectful environment is a more productive one.

TRUE/FALSE

9. Using someone's name acknowledges that person as an individual.

TRUE/FALSE

10. A respectful workplace is an inclusive one.

TRUE/FALSE

Conclude the Session:

1. Reassemble the group.
2. Recap the following key concepts from *Let's Talk . . . Respect—It Matters*:
 - **Respect equals professionalism.**
 - **Respect, and disrespect, in the workplace have practical consequences for individuals and organizations.**
 - **Professionalism, organization policy, and the law are our three touchstones for determining whether behavior is respectful.**
 - **Courtesy is contagious.**
3. Take questions.
4. Thank everyone for participating, and express your hope that participants will take what they've learned at the session and work to improve their organization.

Let's Talk . . . Respect—It Matters
Handout

Discussion Questions

Discussion Questions:

Can you identify disrespectful or unprofessional behavior you or a coworker witnessed or participated in?

What might be a practical consequence of this action for the target/s?

What might be a practical consequence of this action for the organization?

What might be an appropriate response to the behavior?

Quiz

1. Professional behavior is defined in exactly the same way in different organizations.
TRUE/FALSE
2. Commenting on personal attributes, such as on another person's sexual orientation, is disrespectful.
TRUE/FALSE
3. It is important for supervisors to treat their subordinates respectfully.
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4. It is unprofessional to thank a coworker for his or her hard work.
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5. Positive stereotyping is respectful.
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6. Disrespectful behavior can not result in lawsuits.
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7. Being professional means acting appropriately in the workplace.
TRUE/FALSE
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TRUE/FALSE
9. Using someone's name acknowledges that person as an individual.
TRUE/FALSE
10. A respectful workplace is an inclusive one.
TRUE/FALSE

Let's Talk . . . Respect—It Matters Transcript

The respect we show each other at work—the degree to which we're polite, observe each other's boundaries, and take each other's point of view into account—really does matter.

It impacts us as individuals, allowing us to be happier and more productive at work; and it impacts our organization, too, allowing it to flourish.

The behavior of our coworkers, supervisors, and even the customers, patients, or vendors we interact with on the job, has practical consequences.

When we're valued and supported in our efforts, we thrive. But if we're undermined, demeaned, or even just too-often annoyed, we won't be able to fulfill our potential, or worse, we might get sued.

So, how do we practice respect?

While expectations for behavior at work can vary somewhat depending on the culture of the organization, *commonly held standards of professionalism, organization policy, and the law offer us guidelines for a respectful workplace. And we should use these three touchstones as our guide.*

Respect Equals Professionalism

Professionalism is an expression of respect. Our workplace should always be a *professional* environment, as well as a friendly one. Organization policy that mandates professionalism, and behavior that exemplifies it, results in a respectful workplace that is happier, more productive, *and* legally compliant.

Being professional means being *appropriate* in a work context. It means recognizing commonly held boundaries, and making sure we don't cross them.

For instance, it's unprofessional, and disrespectful, to joke about, or even offer an opinion on, someone's personal characteristics—that is, on such things as their ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, political affiliation, gender, or different physical characteristics or mental abilities.

Jackie

I just wondered how she can wear that on her head all day?

Beena

I didn't know how to respond to that.

Not only can these topics be emotionally loaded, inappropriately focusing on personal traits is at best impolite. And at worst, it can be discriminatory and harassing behavior that is actually illegal.

Many organizations have specific policies prohibiting socially inappropriate, uncivil, or discriminatory behavior, even when it's occasional or relatively mild.

John

We should stop hiring people with accents.

Kevin

I'm being discriminated against because English is not my first language.

Patterns of disrespectful behavior can be severe enough though that they are not only violations of such policy but also violations of the law.

When bad behavior creates a hostile atmosphere, it's considered harassment, and may even lead to lawsuits.

Ana Maria

I want to promote him. And I know we'll both have a good time. What's wrong with that?

Dan

She's been promising me a lead role on these new accounts for months now. But she expects a personal, sexual relationship.

Disrespect: What Does It Look Like?

What are some examples of disrespectful behavior in the workplace? It's things like

- Telling hurtful jokes that include gender or racial stereotypes;
- Engaging in unwelcome physical contact such as hugging, back rubs, or intentionally brushing up against someone;
- Sending inappropriate e-mails or text messages, such as those containing insulting humor or sexual content;
- Cyber-bullying on social networking sites;
- Gossiping or spreading rumors;
- Displaying derogatory pictures or cartoons in the workplace;
- Ridiculing others for their appearance, beliefs, or abilities;
- Bullying, abusive conduct, or physical intimidation;
- Using crude or obscene gestures and/or language;
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Ray

He didn't give me the opportunity to learn the new systems because "I'll be happier staying where I am".

Manny

I'm trying to do him a favor. Why have to deal with new challenges? He's probably going to be retiring soon anyway.

We should think before we speak and not assume that everyone else shares our point of view or sense of humor. What may seem like an innocent comment or question by one person may be interpreted as an intrusion or judgment by another.

And remember that stereotyping is offensive and unprofessional. Even when it's a "positive" stereotype.

Sabrina

I heard it growing up and I'm still hearing it at work. That most Asians want a career in medicine, math or science.

Jimmy

My first day a coworker asked me what am I. I knew what she meant. I told her that I was Korean and then she assumed that I worked in IT.

If you stop to think about it, not only do stereotypes provide no actual information about people's abilities, they don't acknowledge them as unique individuals with any number of possible attributes.

Making assumptions based on stereotypes about others or their abilities is limiting, unfair, and disrespectful.

In today's diverse workplace,
focusing on our commonalities, rather than our differences,
helps us to get along
and to appreciate what each of us as unique individuals has to offer.

It's nice to share an occasional laugh with a coworker, but in a respectful workplace, humor should never come at the expense of someone else's feelings.

Even good-natured teasing can be irritating or offensive to the person on the receiving end, especially if it's teasing about how the teaser and the target are different from one another—like someone tall making a short-

joke to someone not so tall, or a man joking to a woman about women being less competent than men.

Ann Marie

I come to work with a joke every Monday morning. So what would a world without gay men be like? We'd all have to cut our own hair and decorate our own apartments.

Nicole

I know that she thinks it's a harmless joke, but not only was Michael, who is gay, uncomfortable, so were the rest of us.

A Respectful Workplace: What Does It Look Like?

A respectful workplace is inclusive, friendly, and collaborative. It's a place where individuals are valued and validated, where they're listened to, and where their contributions are affirmed.

Some simple expressions of respect include

- Making eye contact;
- Using a person's name;
- Asking for someone's input;
- Thanking people for their contributions; and
- Including people socially

Remember the old adage: Courtesy is contagious. And it's especially important that managers act professionally and respectfully toward those they supervise.

I can still be funny. Just not at someone else's expense.

I can see now that being inclusive is good for all of us.

It's nice to be seen as me and not some stereotype.

We should all have the opportunity to grow.

When we interact with our colleagues, we should try to put ourselves in their shoes.

If we do make a mistake and inadvertently cause offense, we should listen to their concerns, and apologize.

We can embrace our diversity, reinforce our commonality, and learn from each other when we listen to and respect one another.

Together, we can ensure that our organization is a respectful and inclusive one, full of possibilities and the satisfaction of a job well done.

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