

Communicating with Respect in the Workplace

Working in a positive environment that promotes growth and opportunities is a top value for employees. This environment is dependent on practices that regularly foster respectful communication. The following suggestions are helpful in day-to-day interactions and are particularly beneficial during challenging times.

- **Be self-aware**

Self-awareness allows you the ability to see yourself as a unique individual. It empowers you to build upon your strengths and make changes in areas that need improvement. Many individuals who practice mindfulness meditation report expanded self-awareness and tolerance.

- **Practice politeness, courtesy, and kindness**

This can be easy to do when you are feeling positive and less so when you are preoccupied with demands on your time and energy or perhaps just not wanting to connect. Be polite and kind anyway. It will strengthen your automatic response even in times when you don't feel it.

- **Recognize that discussions are a process**

Think about discussions as a journey with no ending. If your goal is to simply make a point or to "win" you are not really engaging in a dialogue. This may feel temporarily satisfying but won't expand teambuilding and enhance problem-solving.

- **Listen well**

Active listening requires time and self-discipline. Ask questions to better understand someone's view. Inquire about influences that may add clarity to another person's

perspective. Hold off on sharing whether or not you agree with an alternative view. The point is to open yourself to understanding and to effectively convey your effort.

- **Practice empathy**

Empathy is the ability to put yourself in another person's shoes. It opens yourself to perceptions that are not a part of your own experience. It allows you to view situations differently. Empathy can only occur when we avoid being judgmental, impersonal, and closed-off.

- **Avoid negativity**

Create ground rules for yourself and for your colleagues, such as it is never acceptable to insult, disparage, or make fun of other people, their thoughts, and their beliefs.

- **Value differences -- particularly during stressful times**

Stress activates the adrenaline system. This can assist us with making quick decisions and to act in the short term. However, when stress persists, individually or collectively, it can lead to fatigue, and create barriers to the practices mentioned above. During such times, pause to regroup. Recommit yourself and your teams to remembering that different ideas, perspectives, and backgrounds are what make a workplace inclusive and diverse and pushes it towards progress.

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