

Combating Incivility On Your Job In A Virtual Environment

September 2021



BULLYING PREVENTION CONSULTING



As we are trying to deal with the pandemic, many of us are returning to work. Some companies are working with a hybrid workforce. Even in academia, after surviving virtual meetings, and observing how people are participating remotely, in an effective manner, we now need to rethink our workforce environments, so that we collaborate more effectively in virtual ways.

One thing we can say is that uncivil behavior-subtle insults, interruptions, disregard for minorities and diversity by marginalizing employees, should not happen in any environment, virtual or in person. In fact in virtual environments, online meetings provide more space for such behaviors to thrive-as we

are sitting in the comforts of our homes and responding to those online. It is important for managers and supervisors to create safe spaces that include all voices where everyone is treated with respect.

Incivility occurs because physical distance makes us feel separated and one feels left out, disrespected, withdrawn, or not in the loop. As a result employees can show poor work habits and mental capacity. This dissociation leads to withdrawal and a lack of motivation for one's job. Emails can be written to others with underlying motives-like 'Do you understand this' which sounds like it's a questioning of intelligence for some employees,... and the target may respond

”

Did you really say that I am unable to really understand?



Did you really say that I am unable to really understand?' Such nuances can be viewed as a form of bias and discrimination, which become perpetual stressors for targeted employees.

If one felt excluded from work before COVID-19, the switch to a virtual or hybrid environment can exaggerate the concerns of feeling isolated, as we work at home-secluded from others. No longer do we have casual encounters in the hallway nor elevators, and these virtual meetings serve as the only connection to one's job. Now incivility comes up when someone in a Zoom meeting cuts you off-and it is a behavior that he did in an earlier meeting-and then his boss writes you a defamatory letter and all of a sudden in your home you are feeling isolated.

So here are some things our leaders at our jobs can do to fight this online, uncivil behavior:

1. Create a community agreement that describes that we treat each other with respect and dignity.
2. Try to debrief with your colleagues about virtual interactions that seem questionable.

3. Foster a sense of community by asking your colleagues to have a conversation about changing behaviors. Avoid blame and judgments and work across differences of opinion.

4. Allow for people to voice their comments equally online-have everyone contribute to the resolution of a project.

5. Put people at ease by speaking about personal interests-like recipes, daily exercise, etc.-not work topics.

As our work environments incorporate the virtual aspects of our jobs-provide opportunities for increased personal connections amongst your colleagues.

Bullying Prevention Consulting offers workshops and consults to small and large scale groups including individual sessions.