

eap perspectives

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Solutions Employee Assistance Program

Road Rage = Work Rage

By Bud Wassell, CEAP

It's getting unbearable on the roads these days! There are just too many cars and even my most reasonable friends admit they get unreasonable in their cars. I drive a lot and so I see all kinds of rude behaviors. And yes, I admit I have participated in some angry interchanges on the highways. I have learned though that there is always somebody out there that gets really mad and I've been scared to the point of keeping my gestures to myself.

Think about it though, have you ever, even just once, done any of the following:

- Rant and rave while gesturing with your hand or with a certain finger
- Tailgate someone who has tailgated you
- Cut in front of someone just a bit too close
- Squeeze into a small gap between cars while traveling on the highway at a high rate of speed
- When someone is tailgating you, brake suddenly or slow down then speed up so they can't pass
- Honk angrily or flash your high beams when someone is going too slow in the fast lane
- Yell out the window at someone who is distracted and holding you up

If you're like most people, you've done some of these or other aggressive



There are three sides to every story...

behaviors while behind the wheel. But if you find this is becoming the way you usually drive and you get angry frequently, you're asking for trouble.

In my experience and I'm sure in yours too, there are three sides to every story: my side, your side and the truth. So when there are conflicts between people, whether on the road or in the workplace, you can be sure both parties participated in some way.

Consider this statement that I came across in a training for Road Rage: "More than for almost any other crime, victims of road rage, usually play some role, however unintentional, in provoking the event." When we consult to employees about conflict at work,

HOT HEADED or Heart Healthy

Researchers studied 1,081 older men and found that those who were quick to anger were more likely to have bodily physiological responses that interfered with the ability to ward off heart disease. Such persons had a greater increase in blood pressure in mildly irritating, social situations than persons not easily angered. Some studies have shown that heart disease is more common among those suffering from depression. Anger and irritability can be symptoms of depression. So, if you struggle with being quick to anger, but can't admit it, consider this: It might be a symptom of depression — a very treatable health problem.

Jan/Feb 2000, Journal of Psychosomatic Research

we always find the "three sides" theory to be true. It's hardly ever just one person who is completely to blame. Are you unintentionally provoking aggressive behavior at work? Or even intentionally participating in a conflict? If so, you're still part of the problem, instead of the solution.

Call the EAP for *free & confidential* counseling and referral. Family members are welcome.

1-800-526-3485

www.solutions-eap.com

Solutions EAP is a program of Middlesex Hospital and Behavioral Health Connecticut, LLC.

Solutions
FOR PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE


SOLUTIONS

When Kids See “Fair Fighting”



It's okay for kids to see their parents having disagreements in productive and respectful ways—that's fair fighting. It's one way children learn that they are not the only ones who get angry or who have to “give in.” Being exposed to fair fighting gives kids lessons in handling conflict properly—they learn skills they will need later in their relationships or marriages. Children who think their parents never fight can be unprepared for marital arguments. They may come to believe that when they disagree with someone that something is wrong with the relationship. Or they may decide to avoid conflict as a marital duty.

Explain to your children that even people who care for each other have different opinions. If your children witness an argument, let them know when you have made up. Some topics to keep behind doors: Arguments about them (the children), sex, money, and persons with whom your children have happy relationships, such as in-laws.

Adapted from an article by Susan Kleinman, *Redbook*, 10-01-01, p. 186.

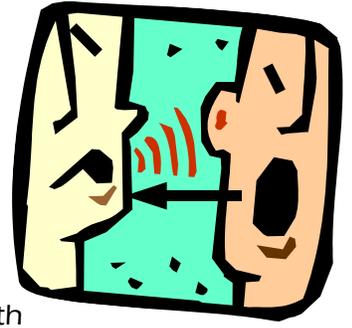
Violence Often Knocks First

Researchers discovered in over 200 workplace violence incidents that the violent employee exhibited many pre-incident symptoms - noticed by other employee -that were typically ignored, dismissed, or minimized. The most common included the employee's vague references to suicide, threats toward supervisors or coworkers, preoccupation with previous incidents of violence, “having a plan” to solve “all problems,” empathy toward those who would commit violent acts, and increased unsolicited comments about firearms.



Workplace Violence Research Institute

Argue But Stay Friends



Learn how to argue fairly with a friend or coworker by using a quick anger management exercise that will help you fight fair.

It's called the five-second rule and it challenges you to wait five seconds in any argument before commenting on what's been said. Tips to make it work:

- 1) Use a 3 x 5 card to keep score on your progress.
- 2) Stick to the issue at hand.
- 3) Talk only about the present point of disagreement.
- 4) Never attack a person's self-esteem.

Diversity, Productivity, & You



America's workplace is empowered by its diversity – the differences that make each of us unique. With diversity comes personal responsibility to ensure that the workplace remains respectful. But, “we all have biases,” according to corporate training expert Myrna Millhone who co-authored the Bureau of National Affairs' training program, *A Winning Balance*. “Biases are attitudes and beliefs that influence behavior in our interactions with others.” The challenge is to identify and understand our biases, and learn if they influence things we say or do that make the workplace disrespectful. The goal: Choose behaviors that help others feel accepted and appreciated. This creates a workplace that is more productive and creative.

Do you actively promote and encourage respect in the workplace? If so, it means you are willing to act as a role model and will risk taking appropriate action to address the behaviors of others that reinforce stereotypes and intolerance. Go to the head of the class if you can answer “yes” to the following questions: 1) Do you challenge others privately when they make racially, ethnically, or sexually offensive comments? 2) Do you challenge others publicly when such comments are made in the presence of those who would be offended? 3) Do you value people who are different because of their unique skills, abilities, perspectives, and approaches?

BNA Communications, Inc.; *A Winning Balance*