Effective Strategies to Address Workplace Incivility

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Incivility and the Work Environment

• Recognized and written about in the literature

• Known by many names; bullying, toxic environment, workplace hostility and others

• Creates personal and professional harm
Workplace Incivility Defined

The American Nurses Association states that Workplace Hostility (or bullying) is

“Repeated, unwanted harmful actions intended to humiliate, offend and cause distress”

(Nursing World, 2015, p. 1)
Workplace Incivility Defined

Low-intensity deviant behavior ..... 
  rude
  discourteous
  lack of regard for others
  intent to harm
  lack for mutual respect
  violation of norms

(Andersson & Pearson, 1999)
Inappropriate Behaviors

• Condescending body language
  Arm crossing
  Eye rolling
  Refusing to listen
  Walking away
  Intentional exclusion of other

• Inattention while others are speaking
  Texting
  Reading e-mail
  Looking away

• Verbal Abuse
  Belittling
  Harmful sarcasm
  Marginalizing others
  Profanity
  Threats
  Gossip

• Non-verbal language
  Snorting
  Drumming of fingers
  Lack of eye contact

(Clark, 2017; Clark, 2018)
Influence of Incivility Personally and in the Work Environment

- **Organizational Harm**
  - Patient Safety
  - Employee Engagement/Retention
  - Increase in employee sick days and turnover
  - Decrease in employee loyalty and support

- **Personal/Professional Harm**
  - Negative affect on physical health
  - Adverse influence on mental well-being, self-confidence and creativity
  - Damaged self-esteem/confidence/competence
  - Loss of creativity
Physical Effects of Workplace Incivility

Chronic stress releases stress hormones
   – Epinephrine (adrenaline)
   – Norepinephrine
   – Cortisol

Cortisol causes weight gain, osteoporosis, digestive problems, hormone imbalances, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, negative impact on the adrenal glands

(Bradberry, 2017)
Effects of Stress on the Brain

A few days of stress: Compromises the effectiveness of neurons in the hippocampus, the area responsible for reasoning and memory

Weeks of stress: reversible damage to brain cells

Months of stress: can permanently destroy brain cells

(Bradberry, 2017)
Managing Uncivil Behaviors

Management of conflict and incivility is built on relationships

There are many relationship theories and models in the literature

Emotional Intelligence (EI)
Emotional Intelligence Defined

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others, and the ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships

(Bradberry, 2017)
EI and the Brain

(http://brainmadesimple.com/amygdala.html)
EI and the Brain

*Brain Stem:* Involuntary functions/Fight or Flight/can take control of actions when it perceives a threat

*Limbic System/ Amygdala:* Processes emotions and memories

*Frontal Lobe:* Responsible for reasoning, planning, parts of speech, movement, some emotions and problem solving
Key to Emotional Control

Use all pieces of the brain together to understand and solve problems most effectively

Recognize when the autonomic reflexes are activated; sweaty palms, heart racing (*brain stem*) ......physically and mentally take a step back and take some slow deep breathes

*Limbic System/Amygdala system* filters thoughts through our emotional memories – how do we normally react during stress and is that effective? When responding, think before speaking. If you know your emotions are still not in control.... walk away or ask for a few minutes before answering back

Now you can move to the frontal lobe and solve the problem appropriately
Managing Incivility in the Workplace and Classroom Environments

Clark Workplace “Civility Index [Revised]©
Clark's Civility Index For Students and Classmates ©

http://stopbullyingtoolkit.org/Clark-Workplace-Civility-Index.pdf

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A Civil Environment

Establishes group norms in the workplace

Creates a safe and supportive place evidenced by mutual trust, respect, and honest feedback

Fosters spirited discussions, debate, and civil discourse grounded in respectful expression; meaning it is ok to agree to disagree (Clark, 2017)

Promotes interdependence, independence, and self-motivation
Creating Civility

Decrease:
  - negativity
  - gossip
  - culture of blaming- use errors as teaching moments
  - maintain a zero tolerance for a communication that is unhealthy, disrespectful, or spoken to people other than the persons directly involved

(“Leaving a Legacy” toolkit. Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence)
Creating Civility

Role-modeling
- healthy communication
- positive reinforcement
- recognition
- tact and sensitivity
- clarifying conversations
- respecting and valuing other’s perspectives
- tolerance
- forgiveness

Help stop the cycle of abuse:
Prepare students, new graduates and nurses to recognize the bullying behavior, label it and be empowered to respond
Strategies for Everyone

Personal Responsibility/Accountability

Questions to ask oneself before responding to a conflict:

What part of this issue do I own?
What do I need to apologize for?
If this conversation was videotaped and shown to people I respect, how would I change my reaction?
How can I show compassion towards this person?

(Proverbs 31 Ministry)
Choices

Each of us make choices everyday. Healthy choices are made realizing that we are human and make mistakes

Accepting that we are accountable for our mistakes allows for learning and opportunities to grow

We have the choice to either be the victim or overcome the situation
Resources for Teaching Nurses Civil Behaviors

http://stopbullyingtoolkit.org

https://www.americannursetoday.com/bullying-toolkit-available/

http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/practicing-language-civility-civil-discourse-and
Resources for Teaching Nurses Civil Behaviors


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https://www.jointcommission.org/assets/1/6/SEA_57_infographic_11_tenets_safety_culture.pdf

https://www.reflectionsonnursingleadership.org/features/more-features/Vol39_1_cindy-s-five-rites-for-fostering-student-driven-civility
References


http://www.nursingworld.org/bullying-workplace-violence