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Your Responsibilities For Maintaining A Respectful Workplace

Everyone should be treated respectfully in the workplace. However, the reality is that often this isn't the case, and issues, problems and conflicts are inevitable.

If you do have an issue with a co-worker, who is responsible for 'fixing' your problem? Your immediate reaction may be to take your grievance to your manager or file a complaint with HR, because after all, it's the responsibility of your employer to 'right the wrong', isn't it?

This 'pass it over to management' attitude has probably been ingrained in all of us from an early age. Remember as kids when we got into strife and we wanted mum or dad to come to our rescue and deal with the fallout? And at school we looked to the teachers and Principal to impose discipline.

Even as adults when there is a problem in the community we expect the police or security officer to step in and sort things out. And if that fails we expect a court to make a decision for us.

Confrontation can be just that - confronting - and it's not uncommon to feel reluctant, uncomfortable or even vulnerable about addressing things directly.

You fear the consequences from the other person; you may feel trapped because the issue relates to someone in a position of power; or you're simply unsure how to put your complaint into words.

Surely it's not unreasonable to 'handball' our workplace problem to our supervisor, manager or HR and get someone else to take responsibility for putting things right?
Wrong!

It's your responsibility to 'have a go.'

The ball is squarely in your court to attempt to resolve the issue, at least in the first instance. Yes, this confrontation might be uncomfortable or difficult for you - these

are perfectly normal feelings - but you can't expect someone else to do this for you.

This is what your company expects of you and is the first step in any company's grievance policy. In fact, if you approach your supervisor with your problem it is his/her responsibility to send you back to have that conversation. Unfortunately, often a supervisor will incorrectly encourage you to put your complaint in writing and send it to HR.

You'll possibly find that the conversation isn't as difficult as you may expect. Aim to resolve the issue quickly and amicably with minimum misunderstanding, preserving the working relationship and keeping it between the parties involved.

Don't wait until there is a recurrence or assume the problem will go away. Approach the employee who made you feel uncomfortable, explain how it affected you and ask them politely to stop. Do this calmly, respectfully, and in confidence. It's possible that the offending employee may not be aware that their behaviour is offensive, and most will change their behaviour once they are aware of the problem.

It is only if this fails should you take your grievance to management. Don't let negative incidents go unchecked because they can produce severe and unwanted longer term repercussions.

We all have a right to have our grievances addressed, however, in all but the most serious breaches of conduct, we also have the responsibility to attempt to deal with it ourselves before we escalate it to management.

The challenge of dealing with poor behaviour can seem overwhelming - it is certainly tiring.

We work with organisations daily to help build more respectful behaviour between people at work, to build more collaborative interactions between colleagues, employees and clients - and in providing the skills to speak up about poor behaviour and performance.

Interested in learning more?

Email ProActive at info@proactive-resolutions.com and ask us about "[Straight Talk](#)"[™] - a proven, evidence-based approach to help us say what we need to say and to listen to what others need to say.

Or - read more what we have to say about why we avoid dealing with poor behaviour - [Managing Difficult Conversations at Work](#)

Sincerely,



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