Hostility Management in the Workplace and Beyond
Objectives

Hostility Management Skills You Can Use:

• Keeping Your Cool
• Verbally Defusing Hostility
• Responding to Physical Aggression
• Using Visualization to Prevent & Respond

Awareness, Visualization and Practice
Overcoming Dissociation

- Mental distancing
- “It makes me uncomfortable to think about it”

Those who open their minds long enough to clearly visualize how they would respond...

- Are more effective
- Feel the most secure

There is no reasonable guidance that says, “Don’t be prepared.”
Hostile/Threatening Behavior

Any conduct that is sufficiently severe, offensive or intimidating to create a \textit{reasonable fear} for one’s own safety, or the safety of their family, friends and/or property.
Managing Threats and Hostility

So, what can you do?

• Be mentally prepared
• Defuse hostile reactions
• Safely escape/avoid
Stages of Escalation

- Anger
- Loss of Verbal Control
- Physical Aggression
Calm Assertiveness

Red Zone = combination of frustration and need to dominate

Melt Down = where you lose focus

Being angry or anxious puts you in a weakened state
Calm Assertiveness

- Impulsive
- Avoidant
- Calm Assertive
- Passive
- Aggressive
Keeping Your Cool

Clear your head technique

4-Count Breathing:

Breathe:
- In for 4"
- Hold in 4"
- Out 4"
- Hold out 4"

- Hold in 4"
- In 4"
- Out 4"
- Hold out 4"
Thoughts that Cause Anger:

• Demand: People do what I think they “should”
• Why? “Because I say so”
• Devaluation

**Event:** Individual calls you a “stupid jerk.”

**Interpretation:**
No right to call me that. You’re the stupid jerk.

**Reaction:** Defensive response. Loose your cool. Verbally attack the individual… or worse!!

“I choose not to upset myself”
Moral vs. Scientific Should

"Should"... The most upsetting word in the English language

Demand: Things should be as I think they should be

Moral Should: Based on beliefs, values, upbringing, etc.

Scientific Should: Everything is as it should be; due to prerequisites

Application: Change prerequisites rather than use moral judgments
Loss of Verbal Control

• Volume and rate of speech increases
• Language insulting or personally critical
• Verbal threats may be articulated

The hostile person…
Provokers

If you want to increase hostility…

- Pointed finger
- Not listening/disagreeing
- Disapproving facial expressions
- Arrogant voice tone/words
- Aggressive body language
- Encroaching on personal space
- Attacking person’s character, ego or pride
- Questioning honesty
Communicating... with Hostile People

- Go with the Flow
  - Resistance causes persistence
- Empathy/Show Caring
  - See it from their perspective
- Establish Trust Through Commonalities
  - “We both don’t like the rules around here.”
Communicating... with Hostile People

- Positive Reframing
  - Give it a positive spin
  - “Good ones like you land on their feet. I’m sure you will.”

- Future Imagery
  - “A year from now this will only be a distant memory.”

- Ask for Their Help
  - “Solution that would work for you?”
    [Strive for win-win]
Communicating... with Hostile People

Deflect Insults

- “I understand that, however…”
- “You may be right, but…”
- Let it bounce off, then focus on resolution

Build Self-Esteem

- Find ways to like him/her
- Positive traits, e.g., hard worker, decent guy, caring father
“I choose not to upset myself.”

Keeping Your Cool

- Let them say what they want to say
- As long as they do what you want them to do
Defusing Threats

“\textit{This is not worth losing your…}”

- Freedom
- Money
- Career/Job
- Family
- Reputation
Defuse Verbally

Build Dignity and Self-Esteem
• “I can tell you’re a decent person.”

Concerns heard and understood
• “We both agree this is a concern. Tell me more.”

Address Unfairness (win-win solution/options)
• “I don’t like to feel unfairly treated either.”

Discuss options for sense of control…
Intervention

Building Ego

• Find a reason to “like” the person
• Mention positive traits
• Respond to upsets as:
  • Understandable
  • Reasonable
  • O.K.
  • Not a problem

Practice in normal settings
The “Oh No” Syndrome

What if these verbal strategies don’t work?
Escalation Toward Physical

When verbal strategies are failing…

- Notice warning signs
- Anticipate aggressor’s moves
- Plan safe escape
Pre-Attack Signs

- Leaning or Moving Forward
- Target Glancing
- Fast Breathing
- Holds Breath
- Jerky Movements
- Glazed Eyes
- Clinched Fists
- Flushed Facial Expression

Start making your plan NOW!!
Imminent Physical Aggression

- Expand your vision
- Avoid “tunnel vision”
- Notice available resources
  - Obstacles
  - Defense tools
  - Escape route
- Anticipate aggressor’s moves

Plan your move!!
Creating Space and Distance

• Call for a Time Out
• Notice Environment
  • Obstacles
    • Desk, chair, table
  • Defense Tools
    • Keyboard, chair, briefcase, phone
• Escape Route
  • Maintain balance
  • Fastest/safest direction
Maintain “Safe” Distance

- Avoid “too close” zone of danger
- Stay six feet away
- Keep something between you
Anticipate Aggressor’s Moves

85% of the population is right handed

- They step with left
- Hit with right hand
- You glide step to right side and away
Stop!! Technique

• When Attack is Imminent
• Last Resort
• To Startle and
• Redirect
Probability Visualizations

Deadly Carjacking

Visualize vulnerable places in your world . . .

• Make a plan NOW
• What would you say and do? Available resources?
Prevention & Preparedness

The best way out.. is to not get in

- Use wise judgment
- Stay vigilant
- Plan ahead

Prevention and Preparedness Mindset

Eyes Open

CMI Behavioral Medical Interventions
Crisis Care Network
Recap

1. Keeping Your Cool
   - Choose not to upset yourself/calm assertiveness

2. Verbally Defusing Hostility
   - Respect, go with flow, fairly treated/win-win, build ego

3. Responding to Physical Aggression
   - Anticipate, make a plan, ready to execute

4. Using Visualization to Prevent and Respond
   - Imagine your most likely scenarios, plan now

Awareness, Visualization and Practice
Questions?