Understanding the Violent Mind

Defusing Threatening Individuals and Workplace Violence Preparedness
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Workplace Violence:
“The tail of the dog is longer than you may suspect.”
Bruce T. Blythe
WPV Response Strategy

- Employee caught destroying company property
- Threatened to kill people at company if fired
- Actively delusional
- Referred for treatment
- Plan to stabilize and fire
- Psychiatrist declared fit-for-duty

What would you do?
Six Years Later . . .

The worst mass murder in state history touches off a massive manhunt. The suspect surrenders near the Hawaii Nature Center.
Objectives

• Understand the Mindset of Threatening People
  – Once you understand the violent mind, you can better influence it in desirable directions

• Defusing Strategies
  – Methods to decrease the likelihood of violent acts

• Components of a Workplace Violence Program
  – Comprehensive
  – Benchmarked
Three Indicators of Violence

- History of violence
- Threat of violence
- Your gut level feeling
Threat Assessment

Assessing Threats . . .

- Biological
- Behavioral
- Social
- Contextual
- Environmental
- Psychological
Threat of Violence Mgmt

- Minimize the probability of real violence
- Manage perception of those impacted by threatening behavior
- Defensibility
Threat Management Problems

- Restraining order
- Arrest
- Mental health treatment
- Disciplinary action
- Site Security

- Can provoke violence
- Doesn’t stop intent
- Insufficient violation
- Minimum incarceration
- Confidentiality
- Poor prognosis
- Can provoke violence
- No protection provided
- Typically unarmed
- Creates employee anxiety

Legitimate tools, but they all have weaknesses
Threat Management Problems

- Restraining order
- Arrest
- Mental health treatment
- Disciplinary action
- Site Security

However, people may feel **afraid** and threatening person may still be **enraged**
Universal Needs

- People in all walks of life want to feel:
  - Successful
  - Accepted by others
  - Significant
  - Fairly treated

- We all have a strong sense of right and wrong
Journey into the Violent Mind

• Imagine you are an angry, threatening person . . .
Understanding Violent Mind

Underlying Issues:
- Rejection
- Failure
- Discomfort/Inconvenience

Ego-Related:
- Correlation with low self-esteem
- Must feel superior to others in order to:
  - Feel OK about self
  - Be in control
Understanding Violent Mind

The Anatomy of Blame:

- Intended
- Unjustified/unfair/unreasonable
- Foreseeable
- Negligent
- Unethical
- Unlawful
- Self-serving
- Dishonest

The Blamer
• Unfairly treated
  – People who make threats in the workplace almost always feel *unfairly treated*

• Integrity/honesty questioned
  – Even if they aren’t telling the truth

• Ego Issues - Situations that make them feel:
  – Disapproval from others
  – Weak or incompetent
  – Out of control
Intervention

Adage:

• “You must meet people where they are before you can influence them in a desirable direction.”
Intervention

Effective communication is the single best defuser

- Inverse relationship between:
  - Effective communication
  - Hostility/misunderstandings
Intervention

Directed toward:

• Feeling heard and understood
• Bolstering self-worth
  — Success
  — Acceptance
• Sense of fair treatment

... and, expanding the individual’s options
Intervention

Making Contact . . .

Entering the Threatening Person’s World:

- Hear and understand
- Conduit of communication
- Bring value
Verbal Judo

- Go in the same direction as the threatening person’s energy
- Strategically align with the threatening person, and
- Then move them in a positive direction

Resistance causes persistence
“I Have a Question Technique”

To redirect toward resolution, align, get information for win-win:

1. **Say:** “I have a question . . .”
2. **Ask the Question:** Want or need to resolve?
3. **Repeat the Response:** Ensure understanding
4. **Defer the Decision**
5. **Set a Specific Time To Get Back**
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, honest, caring father...
Intervention

Building Ego

– Defuse by building self-esteem

• “I can tell you are a person who cares about working.”

• “You’re a good guy who seems to feel unfairly treated at this point.”

• “I can tell you live your life with passion and have a strong sense of right and wrong.”

Practice “one liners” in normal settings
# Workplace Violence Program

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<th>Workplace Violence <strong>Policy</strong></th>
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<td>Threat Response <strong>Team</strong> (TRT)</td>
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- Character-Based Interview Questions
- Background Checks
- Hostility Management Training
- EAP

- Tracking of Threatening Situations
- Provider Assessments
- Physical Security Audits
- Domestic Violence Program
- Employee Workplace Violence Orientation
- Emergency Response Preparedness
- Strategic Crisis Mgmt Preparedness
## Objectives

<table>
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<th>Objective</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<td><strong>Understand the Mind set of Threatening People</strong></td>
<td>Failure, rejection, control, unfair, ego, self-esteem</td>
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<td><strong>Defusing Strategies</strong></td>
<td>Communication, win-win, go with flow, build ego</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Components of a Workplace Violence Program</strong></td>
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Questions?

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