



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT CONFLICT AND HARASSMENT?

Preventing conflict and harassment is better than fixing the damage. It is *everyone's* responsibility at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Here are some tips:

You can contribute to an atmosphere of mutual trust, support and respect. The old adage "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you" remains true today. Politeness, respect and restraint are the linchpins of a civilized society—the basic tools we need to get along with each other. They are as indispensable in the workplace as they are in any other situation that brings people together.

If you're not sure if something you do or say could offend someone, ask that person. This is essential in a diverse working environment that includes people of different cultures, religions, sexual orientation and beliefs. Some comments and behaviour are obviously degrading, embarrassing or insulting. Others are not so clearly offensive. As well, what is considered offensive varies from person to person and may also change according to the context. Think before you speak. And remember, when in doubt, ask.

Watch body language. Body language, tone of voice or sudden silences can show that a person is uncomfortable with what you are doing or saying. While someone who feels uncomfortable with certain comments or behaviour should let you know, he or she won't always feel confident enough to do so. You need to be alert to how individuals react to your behaviour.

Apologize, even if you meant no harm. Even if you meant no harm, if you made someone feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, degraded or exploited, your behaviour caused a problem. Try apologizing and changing your behaviour around that person.

If you are a victim. . .

Wherever possible, make your concerns known to the person who is causing the problem. While this is not always an option, in some instances simply letting that person know can open lines of communication that can lead to resolution. Sometimes, it also helps to examine your own behaviour.

Even if you're not a victim. . .

Shout, "dressing down" an employee in front of co-workers, name calling and other inappropriate behaviour are often witnessed by people other than the target. If you see behaviour that is inappropriate to the workplace, speak to the person responsible, in private, and describe how his or her behaviour comes across.

You can also discuss inappropriate behaviour privately with the person who was the target. Be discreet and supportive, and encourage that person to take appropriate steps to stop the problem.

If the behaviour was serious enough or persistent, consider what you can do to help. Remember, inappropriate behaviour such as harassment is a departmental concern, not just a personal conflict. Others are likely to suffer if it is not stopped.

If you're a manager. . .

As a manager, you are responsible for creating a workplace where harassment does not happen and for responding quickly and effectively if it does. You should not wait for a conflict to erupt to ensure that the atmosphere in the workplace is positive. Moreover, you are expected to make every effort to re-establish positive working relationships following a harassment incident.

Be alert to the atmosphere of the workplace. You are responsible for the way