

Facilitator's Guide

Teasing Turns Personal



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This guide can assist equal opportunity professionals and leaders in determining the best possible solution for the related video. Strategies provided in this guide are not an all-inclusive list. Unit members should be encouraged to develop their own unique strategies based on the situation.

Training Objectives

- To discuss indicators and potential effects of observed behaviors in the video
- To generate thoughts and ideas about how to best address this situation as a leader
- To understand different approaches in addressing concerns

What (behaviors) did you observe in the video?

- Army Master Sergeant (MSG) Gnansounou (behind desk)
 - She appeared to remain neutral during discussion
 - She “nodded” her head as a method to show she was paying attention
- Army Staff Sergeant (SSG) Vianna (in front of desk)
 - She appeared frustrated because of the way she was being treated
 - She was upset with people whom she felt were being disrespectful because she was riding a scooter

If you observed this interaction, what assumptions could be made?

- The SSG was being made fun of due because she used a motorized scooter or due to her disability
- The SSG felt that others did not understand her need for the scooter (potential medical limiting situation or disability)
- The SSG is upset by the way she is being treated
- The MSG was in a position to assist the SSG with her situation

If you observed the SSG being treated unfairly, what could/should you do?

- Direct Approach- Immediately inform the individual(s) that what they are doing is inappropriate/wrong
- Indirect Approach- Send an anonymous email, write a letter, or indirectly inform the individual(s) what they are doing is offensive, unwelcome and unwanted (be as specific as possible)
- Third Party- Inform a higher level leader (such as the MSG) who then can/will be able to correct the behavior and talk to the harasser(s), letting them know what they are doing and how it is impacting the individual
- Report the harassment directly to the chain of command- File a complaint

How would you prevent further occurrences such as these?

- Explain to others that making fun of, and/or treating someone differently for any reason can have a negative outcome, not only for the individual, but also an entire organization, e.g., decreased or impaired trust, cohesion, confidence in others, etc.
- Ensure others understand that their actions could be perceived as being discriminatory if the individual they are poking fun at has a disability even if they don't recognize them as having one
- Educate your members on the impact of inappropriate behaviors and establish acceptable standards of conduct
- Stay vigilant to what is occurring around you, if inappropriate behaviors are observed, intervene early and often, demonstrating a zero tolerance environment to ensure every member is treated with dignity and respect

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Some might consider the behaviors exhibited in this scenario as harmless, but they are not. Many people have disabilities, some evident-some not, some temporary-some permanent. Every individual deserves to be treated with respect regardless of their situation. Making fun of a person, even if it is only meant as a joke, still has the potential of negatively effecting the target of the comments. Disparaging comments, even in a “joking” manner, rarely makes others feel good about the situation, and it is demeaning in many ways. If allowed these types of behavior have the potential to escalate and can foster a variety of individual and organizational climate changes such as, a lack of trust in leadership, low unit cohesion, and low morale, etc. Identifying inappropriate behaviors and intervening early are crucial to developing a cohesive and professional workplace.