

Facilitator's Guide

Hallway Chatter



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This guide can assist equal opportunity (EO) 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 the observed behaviors
- 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?

- In the hallway
 - The EOA overheard multiple comments which could be perceived by some as derogatory or disparaging towards others; The EOA appeared disappointed from what he was hearing
 - The two Service Members were discussing news items pertaining to “third world countries”
 - The two Service Members got quiet once they realized they were being overheard by the EOA
- In the cubicle (the service member sitting down)
 - Was upset and unhappy with the individual on the service phone call he was on, with him implying the service agent was from another country and couldn’t help him solve his problem
 - Stated he hated calling tech support due to them being foreigners
 - The customer assistance individual on the phone was unable to assist the Service Member and was being blamed for not understanding or able to solve the problem

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

- There is a social acceptance of disparaging/ derogatory comments towards others or those perceived to be non-Americans
- The individuals may lack an awareness towards possible negative or disparaging behaviors
- There is an overall concern from the EO professional pertaining to the comments he overheard
- Members feel comfortable expressing themselves in their work environment though some might consider their comments/opinions to be inappropriate or offensive
- Members are not held challenged or questioned on their behaviors
- Members in hallway appeared to be in agreement

If you observed this interaction, what could/should you do?

- If you are offended, politely inform the offender what they said/did and how it impacts you
- In the hallway and in the cubicle
 - Inform the service member(s) that their comments might be perceived as disparaging and inappropriate
 - Discuss how their comments can be interpreted by others
- Inform the commander/senior leadership about the observed behaviors; how you (did/didn’t) address the situation; recommendations to ensure the observed behaviors do not continue

How would you prevent further occurrences such as these?

- Discourage others from accepting negative behaviors

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- Review (command) policy letters ensuring they are posted in a highly visible location and it explains items such as unlawful discrimination and sexual harassment, how it will not be practiced, condoned, or tolerated
- Request the senior leadership lead training events (attend, provide open/closing remarks, etc.) to provide emphasis on its importance and the opportunity to express/clarify appropriate standards
- Ensure all members know how and where to file complaints; and that all complainants will be protected from acts or threats of reprisal
- Conduct professional leadership training emphasizing dignity and respect towards others and potential actions towards violators

Some might consider the behaviors exhibited in this scenario as harmless, but they are not. The comments and behaviors exhibited in this scenario may seem simple in nature. However, discussing world events in such could be considered disparaging or derogatory and offensive to those of other ethnic backgrounds. And, not every Service Member is a U.S. Citizen; some are immigrants working their way to this privileged status. Within the DoD, our members work in multiple multi-national and coalition environments. Consider this: What would a member of another country think if they overheard such comments?

Disparaging comments rarely make others feel good about the situation, and it is demeaning in many ways. If uncorrected these types of behavior could become more pervasive and lead to bigger issues, such as intolerance towards others. Unchecked, these behaviors can foster strained relationships, show a lack of mutual respect, and potentially lead to a harassing, hostile, or an offensive environment. If inappropriate behaviors are allowed to continue they can escalate and foster a variety of individual and organizational climate changes such as, a lack of trust in leadership, low unit cohesion, and low morale, etc. Recognizing and identifying potential inappropriate behaviors and intervening early are crucial to developing a cohesive and professional workplace.