

MANAGING

to Work It Out

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WELCOME!

Goals

In this program, we will learn to:

- (1) Understand the differences in perspectives between ourselves and our employees.
- (2) Recognize how underlying beliefs and biases affect the way we deal with employee problems.
- (3) Learn a structured way to solve employee problems one step at a time.
- (4) Sharpen communication skills that will help us through tough situations with employees.

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Dedication

This is dedicated to the memory of Judy Kaufmann, DWI Project Director, whose vision began this project and whose spirit has seen it through. Hey Jude...

Rationale

The "Workin' It Out" program series was developed for the Denver Workforce Initiative to meet the needs of both employers and employees by (1) better preparing the residents of low-income neighborhoods for the interpersonal challenges of the workplace, and (2) better preparing employers to support and manage entry-level workers.

The "Managing to Work It Out" program is designed to help supervisors develop greater self-awareness, confidence, and skill in effectively managing entry-level workers.

Lesson 3

Home v. Work Perspectives

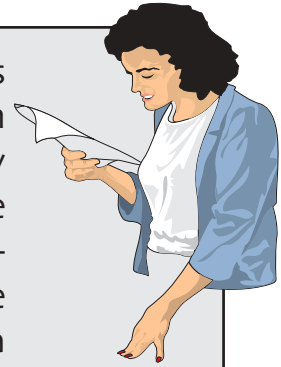
SAMPLE

**SUPERVISORY
SECRET #3**

**“Everything people do makes
PERFECT SENSE, at least to them.”**

“Why can’t you understand?”

Brenda is a six-month employee, a single mom who has a six-year-old son with chicken pox. Normally she's on time, but she has been late to her job at the shoe factory once already this week. She is running behind schedule again because her sister was late getting to her apartment to babysit. Brenda is a bit stressed out, but she figures that under the circumstances, she's entitled to a little leeway. *“After all, he should understand that my kids come first, right?”* she rationalizes.



Brenda rushes into work 15 minutes late, trying to sneak in as inconspicuously as possible. Mr. Carr stalks over, red-faced and glaring. He points at his watch and raises his voice, "This is TWICE this week! What's your excuse this time?"

Brenda jumps. *“He's really upset!”* She is shocked and scared, but she calms herself down to respond. "Mr. Carr, I know I'm late, but my son is sick and my sister was late and..."

"Never mind! I don't have time to hear it!" Carr snaps harshly.

“Who does he think he is, talking to me like that? He shouldn't be making me look bad in front of everyone!” Brenda says to herself, now angry instead of scared. "Well, don't ASK me then! Just who do you think you ARE anyway, Mr. Man? You're nobody special, you know!" she snaps back, and everyone around her laughs.

Suddenly, Carr notices that everyone is watching this confrontation, and he becomes defensive. "That's it, you've had it," he mutters. Brenda shakes nervously as her co-workers crowd around her, laughing, and Carr stalks off.

"I've got to do what's right!"



Mr. Carr

Brenda

Beliefs What we think is TRUE or SHOULD be happening	SAMPLE	
Rules What we have permission to do if beliefs are violated		

Personal Beliefs Survey

Directions: Answer this survey about your beliefs in your *PERSONAL* life. Rate your belief in each item on the following scale:

1: Not at all 2: A little	3: Somewhat	4: A lot 5: Very Strongly
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[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]	1. Life should be fun.
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]	2. You should be appreciated for who you are, not just what you can do.
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]	3. Family should come first.
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]	4. You should give yourself a break when you've worked hard.
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]	5. You should be able to trust your friends with secrets.
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]	6. People should help each other out problems.
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]	7. If you make a mistake, you should keep it to yourself.
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]	8. Personal appearance should be a personal decision.
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]	9. You should be able to live by your own rules.
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]	10. You should be open and honest about your feelings.

For discussion:

Which statements do you believe MOST STRONGLY in your personal life? Why?

Unspoken Rules of the Workplace

Every workplace has its WRITTEN policies and procedures. But there are also a number of UNSPOKEN RULES which many employers believe they shouldn't have to explain. Although they vary from one workplace to another, some of the most common ones are:

- 1. Deal with your personal feelings on your own time.**
- 2. Work comes first. Don't let home and family issues get in the way.**
- 3. Do what you are asked or told to do, even when you don't want to.**
- 4. You are paid to show up on time and do your job. Don't expect a pat on the back for doing the minimum.**
- 5. Always stay busy, or at least look busy.**
- 6. Work is work. Don't expect it to always be fun.**
- 7. If you mess up or don't know something, ask for help.**
- 8. Do your best to fit in. Don't act or dress too different.**
- 9. Stay out of other people's problems.**
- 10. There are no secrets in the workplace. If you say something, it WILL get around.**

Based on a 1997 survey of Denver, CO employers

Personal v. Work Conflicts

Many times, the beliefs people hold dear in their PERSONAL LIVES conflict with the UNSPOKEN RULES OF THE WORKPLACE. Match conflicting beliefs from each column.

PERSONAL BELIEFS

1. *Life should be fun.*
2. *You should be appreciated for who you are.*
3. *Family should come first.*
4. *You should give yourself a break when you work hard.*
5. *You should be able to trust your friends with secrets.*
6. *Friends should help each other out with problems.*
7. *If you make a mistake, you should keep it to yourself.*
8. *Personal appearance should be a personal decision.*
9. *You should be allowed to set your own rules.*
10. *You should be open and honest about your feelings.*

UNSPOKEN RULES OF WORK

1. **Deal with your personal feelings on your own time.**
2. **Work comes first. Don't let home and family issues get in the way.**
3. **Do what you are asked or told to do, even when you don't want to.**
4. **You are paid to show up on time and do your job. Don't expect a pat on the back for doing the minimum.**
5. **Always stay busy, or at least LOOK busy.**
6. **Work is work. Don't expect it to always be fun.**
7. **If you mess up or don't know something, ask for help.**
8. **Do your best to fit in. Don't act or dress too different.**
9. **Stay out of other people's problems.**
10. **There are no secrets in the workplace. If you say something, it WILL get around.**



Work Conflict Examples



1. Jamie works at the front desk of a major hotel chain. One night, her drawer came up \$50 short, but she didn't tell anyone about it. The next day, her supervisor was angry with her.

Jamie: "I KNEW they would accuse me of stealing it! See? That's why I didn't say anything!"

Which personal belief is Jamie using at work? _____

Supervisor: "If she'd come to me last night, we could have straightened it out before it got to the business office. It wasn't a serious problem THEN, but now it reflects poorly on both of us."

What workplace rule is the supervisor using? _____

2. Lori works as a clerk in a supermarket. Her supervisor asked her to clean up a spill in the back, but she ignored him.

Lori: "I'm a clerk, not a janitor. He should get a janitor to do stuff like that. Why do I always have to do what HE says?"

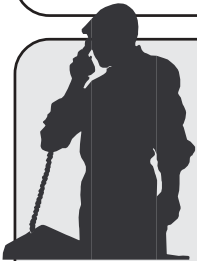
Which personal belief is Lori using at work? _____

Supervisor: "If she's standing there doing nothing and everyone else is busy, I'm going to ask her to help out. She's always breaking the rules, like they don't apply to her."

What workplace rule is the supervisor using? _____



SAMPLE



3. Jonathan answers phones at a call center. His shift manager wrote him up for being late to work and taking an extra 10 minutes on break.

Jonathan: "I don't know what she's complaining about! This job is so @#\$% boring, she's lucky I show up at all!"

Which personal belief is Jonathan using at work? _____

Supervisor: "He just doesn't get it. He's constantly slacking off. What was he expecting when he got hired? To be entertained? Nobody loves his job all the time, but you do your best anyway."

What workplace rule is the supervisor using? _____

KEY POINTS

in Lesson 3

1. New entry-level workers often use home-based (social) beliefs instead of work-based (business) beliefs to judge the appropriateness of their behavior.
2. Because many new entry-level workers lack prior work experience, they often do not intuitively understand the unspoken rules that guide social interactions in the workplace.
3. Even when they do understand the unspoken rules of the workplace, entry-level employees may resist them if they appear to conflict with their home beliefs.

SkillCheck #3

PART 1: Answer T (true) or F (false).

- _____ 1. When a rule is "unspoken," we are allowed to talk about it.
- _____ 2. Many employers simply EXPECT new workers to understand their unspoken rules.
- _____ 3. Every workplace has unspoken rules.
- _____ 4. Personal beliefs can conflict with what is expected in the workplace.

PART 2: Read the following story about Ronnie, who rescheduled his interview and was hired as a custodian at your school. In the second paragraph, underline TWO unspoken rules of Ronnie's new workplace that he doesn't seem to understand.



Ronnie got a job a month later as a custodian at an elementary school. He liked his job so far, but was having a hard time with some of the older children, who would talk back to him in the hall. Ronnie was complaining to Mr. Johnson about some of the kids at the school: "-- and these little monsters are just asking for it! One of these days I'm going to get my hands on one of them and teach 'em a lesson. I was just telling one of the teachers--"

Johnson cut him off. "Ronnie, hang on. I can understand getting frustrated. A lot of these kids can be a handful. But I hope you know that you can't EVER put your hands on them, right? And it's okay for you and me to talk privately about this stuff, but you've GOT to be careful about what you say around here. Too much talk about 'teaching them a lesson' and someone might think you could be abusing the children. Do you understand what I'm saying?"