

# Dealing with Anger and Hostility in the Workplace

SupportLinc Employee Assistance  
Program (EAP)

Penn State Health



# Disclaimer

The general views, thoughts and opinions expressed in this presentation are expressly those of the presenter. The presentation is intended to provide general tips, advice and coping skills, and may not entirely pertain to your circumstance or you as an individual in a professional or clinical capacity. For specific advice on your unique situation, please reach out to a licensed financial or clinical professional for a confidential, one-on-one consult. CuraLinc Healthcare and the presenter are not held responsible or liable for any consequences or damages due to an individual taking action based on the information presented herein.

# Objectives

## This training is designed to help you:

- Define “anger” and “hostility”
- Understand the traits of angry and hostile people
- Identify your personal triggers
- Develop an awareness of your role
- Learn skills to deal with angry or hostile people

# Defining anger and hostility

## Merriam-Webster definitions

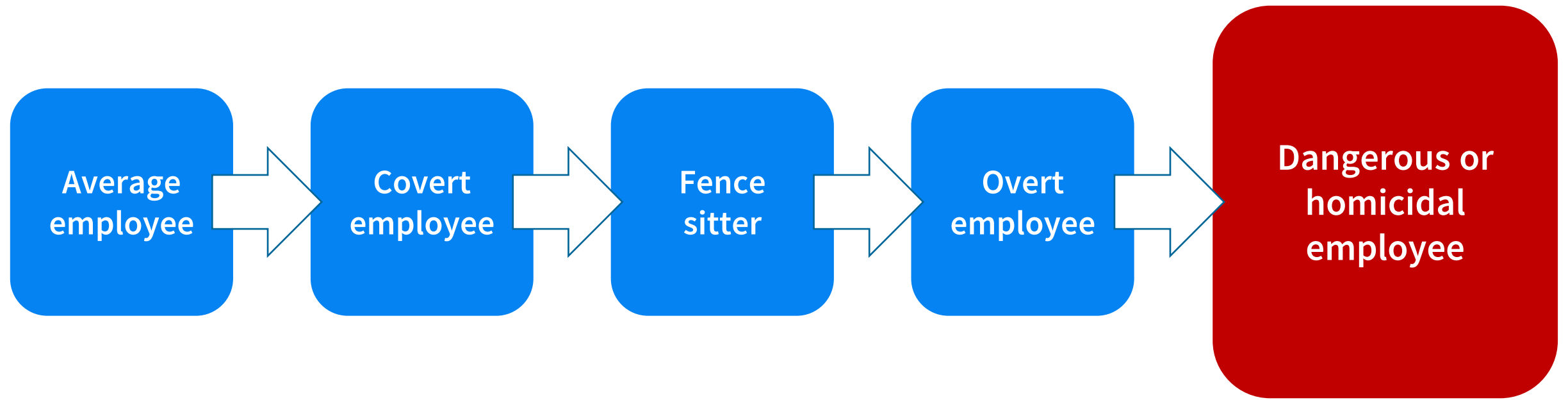
### Anger

- A strong feeling of displeasure and usually of antagonism; rage.”

### Hostility

- “A deep-seated, usually mutual, ill-will; conflict, opposition, or resistance in thought or principle.”

# Continuum of anger to hostility



# S.A.F.E

## How to keep yourself safe in the workplace

<b>S</b>	<b>Self-awareness</b>	<b>“Am I feeling threatened?”</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Assess context</b>	<b>“Am I reacting out of proportion to what the situation warrants?”</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>Factors</b>	<b>“What are the circumstances surrounding the incident?”</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Take action if appropriate.</b>

# Know yourself

- Recognize how triggers affect you
- Defuse yourself before trying to defuse another person
- What triggers affect you?



# Your actions

**Listen attentively**

**Remain calm**

**Don't overreact**

**Try to understand their perspective**

**Allow for individual space**



# Defusing the situation

1. Let the person talk about their anger and don't challenge them.
2. Ask for clarification of their problem or issue.
3. Tell the person that their actions are inappropriate.
4. Inform the person that they need to calm down in order for the conversation to continue.
5. Stop the interaction and inform the person that they can continue later when they are calmer.

# Defusing the situation continued

6. Inform the person that their actions are threatening and against company policies.
7. Alert designated personnel that a person within the company is becoming volatile and aggressive.
8. Contact the SupportLinc Employee Assistance Program for consultation and guidance.
9. Call security or police.

# Employer's responsibility

- Have a written policy
- List and describe prohibited behaviors
- Have detailed reporting procedures
- Maintain confidentiality
- Forbid retaliation
- Communication



# Scenario #1

You pass Mike in the hallway and ask, "Do you have the report I requested from you yesterday?"

Mike turns aggressively towards you and replies, "Are you talking to me?"

**What is your next step in this situation?**

- a) Tell Mike to go cool down and then get you the report.
- b) Ask Mike to come into your office to discuss his anger and ask for clarification.
- c) Report Mike directly to HR so they can handle his behavior.

## Scenario #2

Gary has filed many safety-related grievances against the company and feels they have not responded to his complaints. He approaches you, the Safety Director, and asks, “What is going on with my grievances?” You respond, “I will get to them later.” Gary become enraged and slams his fist against the wall shouting “If this doesn’t change, someone’s going to get hurt!”

### **What is your next step in this situation?**

- a) You should yell at Gary to get out of your office until he can behave himself.
- b) Gary has started to use physical behaviors as a way to express himself. This can be construed as threatening. Take this incident to the appropriate person(s) within the company.
- c) Do not react to Gary's outburst. Let him walk away and assume he'll return when he's calmed down.



# Interactive toolkits

## Mindfulness

[www.mindfulness.tools](http://www.mindfulness.tools)

Practical tools and exercises for incorporating mindfulness into everyday life.

## Meditation

[www.meditate.tools](http://www.meditate.tools)

Easy-to-use collection of resources that includes guided meditations, tip sheets and more.

## Resiliency

[www.resiliency.tools](http://www.resiliency.tools)

Skill development resources to help you 'bounce back' from challenging situations.

## Sleep fitness

[www.sleepfitness.tools](http://www.sleepfitness.tools)

Information and resources to help you learn good sleep habits and achieve healthy sleep.

# What is SupportLinc?

The SupportLinc Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a health benefit, separate from your medical insurance, offered by your employer to help you manage life's daily challenges.

SupportLinc can refer you to professional counselors, services and resources that will help you and your eligible family members resolve a broad range of personal and work-related concerns.

# What services are included?

## Work-life benefits



### Manager consultation

Expert guidance and referrals for: interpersonal communication, effective time management, conflict resolution, navigating team dynamics, cultural diversity in the workplace and more



### Legal consultation

Free in-person or telephonic consultation with a licensed attorney

No employment law



### Identity theft consultation

Free consultation with an identity theft recovery professional

Tailored recovery action plan



### Financial consultation

Expert guidance and consultation from financial professionals



### Dependent care referrals

Expert referrals to child and adult/elder care providers, facilities and other resources



### “Convenience” referrals

Guidance and referrals to a variety of daily living resources: home improvement, entertainment services, pet care, auto repair, wellness, travel, handymen, volunteer opportunities etc.



# Getting started



**Call:** 1-888-881-LINC (5462)



**QR Code:**



**Visit:** [www.supportlinc.com](http://www.supportlinc.com)



**Log in or create account**  
(code: psh, or pennstatehealth)

## SupportLinc

Support for everyday issues. Every day.

# Additional resources

Conflict is a normal, natural part of human relationships. People will not agree about everything all the time. In and of itself, conflict is not necessarily a negative thing. When handled constructively it can help people to stand up for themselves and others, and work together to achieve a mutually satisfactory solution. But if the conflict is handled poorly, it can cause anger, hurt, divisiveness and more serious problems. This guide discusses how to deal with conflict in a constructive manner.

## Sources of conflict

There can be many causes or reasons for conflict. However, some of the most common include:

- Personal differences such as values, ethics, personalities, age, education, gender, social and economic status, cultural background, temperament, health, religion, political beliefs etc..
- A clash of ideas, choices or actions. For instance, conflict can occur when people have incompatible goals when they are in direct competition, or even when they have different work styles.
- Finally, poor communication or miscommunication is one of the biggest causes of conflict.

## Preventing conflict

While it isn't possible to prevent all conflict, there are steps that you can take to try to keep conflict to a minimum. One way to manage conflict is to prevent it from occurring in the first place. Preventing conflict is not the same as avoiding conflict. Preventing conflict means behaving and communicating in a way that averts needless conflicts.

Consider the following tips:

- Respect differences. Many conflicts arise from differences in gender, generations, cultures, values etc.. We live in an increasingly diverse world. Learn to respect and celebrate peoples' differences and opinions.
- Treat others as you'd like to be treated. Regardless of your personal opinion of someone, be professional, courteous, respectful and tolerant, even when you're frustrated. If a person treats you disrespectfully, calmly tell them you do not appreciate it. Do not exacerbate the situation by retaliating with inappropriate behavior or comments.
- Keep negative opinions to yourself. Most people are put off by hearing negative comments about others—especially if it's about a personal issue. In the workplace, this may lead to disciplinary action. Friends and acquaintances may be equally "turned off" by negative comments about someone, particularly if they feel they are being drawn into a conflict or being asked to take sides. If you need to vent about a personal issue, do so outside of the workplace, keep it to a close, trusted friend or a loved one and keep it to a minimum.
- Keep your distance. Unfortunately, this is often easier said than done. Often the conflicts arise with those who are closest to us. It is often easier to get along if you respect one another's privacy and boundaries. Taking a break from each other, even if it is just for a few minutes to breathe and get some space, can go along way in keeping the peace.

## Resolving conflict

Sometimes, conflict cannot — or should not — be avoided. Knowing how to deal with conflict is important for anyone. However, often people have not been given the tools to effectively deal with conflict. Consider the following tips:

- Address the issue early. The longer you let an issue fester, the more time you waste and the greater chance you have of it spiraling into other problems.
- Address the issue privately. Set up a time to talk in a private place, where you won't be overheard or interrupted. Speak to the person with whom you have the conflict and try to resolve the issue one-on-one before involving others.
- Expect discomfort. You may have to say up front: "Although this is uncomfortable for me, if I don't address this, I'm afraid we will not meet our goal."
- Be specific and objective. Identify the specific issue at hand and the effect it is having. Avoid generalizing statements such as "always," "ever" or "never." Stick to the subject; try not to digress into broad personality issues or revive past issues.
- Focus on the outcome. Don't dwell on problems or blame. Keep the spotlight on finding solutions and how you will reach the desired outcomes. "In order to reach the goal of X, I think we need to do Y."
- Be open. Doing so establishes an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation. Listen to and consider others' opinions, points of view and ideas. Understand and appreciate that they think differently than you and may bring a greater, or different, understanding to the table that will help resolve the problem more quickly and effectively.

# Additional resources

- Respond constructively. Let the other person know you value what he or she is saying, even if you don't agree. Try to avoid responding negatively or derisively, for example criticizing, ridiculing, dismissing, diverting (talking about yourself rather than about what the other person has said) or rejecting the other person or what they are saying.
- Know your triggers. Learn to recognize your personal warning signs for anger and figure out the ways that work for best for you to constructively control your anger.
- Maintain a sense of humor. Be willing to laugh, including at yourself. Maintaining a sense of humor can relieve stress and tension and help get you and others through a difficult time.
- Learn to compromise. Compromise is important in any relationship. If you disagree on an issue, discuss the problem calmly, allow each person to explain his or her point of view, and look for ways to meet each other in the middle.
- Don't attempt to resolve conflict when tempers are flaring. During an argument, often no one can agree on a reasonable solution. If that is the case, agree to take a break and come back to the problem later, when you have had time to settle down and think about the issue.
- Know when to retreat. The conflict resolution process will not always work. The level of the skills of some people may not be at the point where they can be full partners in this process. For example, you may have a spouse who does not want to or know how to, solve the problem. You may also have a conflict with a co-worker, boss or higher-up who is known for irrational outbursts. You must take all these factors into consideration and know when it may be more appropriate for you to cut your losses and retreat.
- Practice forgiveness. There may be times when someone makes a mistake or says or does something hurtful — whether intentionally or unintentionally. While it's okay to be angry, it's also important to let go of the anger and move on.

## **Mutual conflict resolution**

In most cases you should be able to resolve conflicts by working with others involved. Here are some steps to consider:

Step one: Identify the purpose and importance of the conflict—and your mutual desire to solve it.

Step two: Takes turns listening to each other's side. This is a very important step and one that requires good listening skills.

Step three: Once all the issues are discussed, repeat and summarize what was said. It may help to write this down or even create “minutes” to document issues discussed.

Step four: Ask questions as needed and encourage others to do the same. Do you understand their point of view? Are you sure they understand yours? Clarify as needed.

Step five: No matter how intense the conflict, you should always find issues or points that you agree upon. For instance, “we agree our goal is to increase sales by 10% this year.” Or, “we agree that we need to cut our household costs, we just don't agree on what costs we can cut.”

Step six: Next, list ALL Solutions— even those that may seem unrealistic, unreasonable or wrong.

Step seven: Review all the possible solutions and highlight those you find mutually acceptable. Hopefully, you will have at least one or two that you agree upon.

Step eight: Choose the one (or few) that you agree will work best.

Step nine: Put a plan into action. What steps will you take to implement? How will you review progress?

By creating step-by-step guidelines and mutually agreed upon solutions and action plans, you should be able to minimize conflict and achieve the desired goals.

For further resources, please go to your portal and use the search bar to type in “Anger Management,” “Conflict Resolution,” “Dealing with Difficult People Flash Course” and “Effective Communication Flash Course.”

# Moving ahead



What did you get out of today's presentation?

Which concepts are working in your life and why?

Who can be a support for you to make change?

Which concepts are *not* working in your life and why?

What 3 ideas are going to be the most helpful for you?

How can you support someone else with change?

What can you do in the next 24 hours to apply these concepts?

What are your biggest barriers for change?