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Counseling Case Example



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Dear Employees,

We offer psychological counseling in person, online, by telephone, and via email. Please feel free to call us at our toll-free number, 0120-783-744, to make an appointment. This number can be reached from mobile phones.

We hope that our counseling services will contribute, even in a small way, to your well-being and effectiveness at work.

* If you would like to learn more about our counseling services before contacting us, we have provided a case example below to give you an idea of what counseling may look like. The following case is fictional but is loosely based on several real cases. The client's identity has been intentionally disguised to protect confidentiality.

Schedule a Counseling Appointment

 **0 1 2 0 - 7 8 3 - 7 4 4**

Office Hours: (excluding holidays)

Monday to Friday: 10:00-20:00

Saturday: 10:00-18:00



E-mail :

sodan@wellness-sodan.com

* We will respond within two business days of receiving your message.

Case1



A Manager's Sensitivity Small Signs—Addressing Workplace Incivility Before It Escalates

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Client: Mr.B, a group leader, contacted the counseling office, saying:

"I supervise approximately twenty employees. There are several situations in my department that concern me, and I would like to consult with you. Each event seems minor on its own. I might be worrying too much, but... I would like to request a face-to-face consultation."

After receiving the request, the counselor(Co) promptly contacted the Client(CI) and arranged a meeting. At the client's request, the counselor visited the company.

(CI: Client, Co: Counselor)

<First Session>

CI: "About a month ago, I conducted 1-on-1 interviews with my subordinates. Issues related to work can be addressed together with the individuals involved, but I am wondering how to respond to some seemingly trivial matters that are unrelated to work itself."

"During those interviews, I responded lightly and let the matters slide, but when I reflected on them later, I realized that nearly half of my staff had raised similar concerns even though the specific situations differed. I then started to think that I must not neglect it."

When asked about the concerns raised by subordinates, Mr.B described the following examples:

1. Greetings were not acknowledged.
2. Colleagues do not eye contact when spoken to, remaining focused on their PCs or mobile phones.
3. Emails or chat messages received no replies, or replies were significantly delayed.
4. Some employees do side work during meetings.
5. Certain individuals felt that they alone were addressed in an overly familiar or distressful manner.

Co's Intervention: The counselor listened to Mr. B carefully and sought to grasp the situation. The counselor acknowledged his intuition and sensitivity as a manager in recognizing that these concerns might be significant than trivial.

Then, the counselor encouraged Mr. B to consciously observe the workplace over the following weeks, paying attention to both positive and concerning interactions, and arranged a follow-up session.

<Follow-Up Session>

CI: Two weeks later, Mr. B returned and reported:

"As you suggested, I observed my staff closely and kept records of what I noticed. The experience made me realize how little attention I had actually been paying to my subordinates."

"I observed behaviors that made me wonder whether I was becoming overly sensitive. For example, some employees look up and make eye contact to greet me, but would not greet people at lower positions than themselves. I also noticed that people were addressed differently depending on who they are. "

When asked about positive observations, Mr.B added:

"I also noticed some excellent examples of communication. When approached by colleague, some employees would stop their work and invited the other person to sit down. Others would stand up from their chairs and talked while making eye contact. At such times, both parties appeared relaxed and engaged, creating a very good atmosphere."

Mr. B shared many additional observations, demonstrating remarkable insight and the enthusiasm to improving the workplace.

Co's Intervention: Based on Mr.B's observations and reflections, the counselor discussed the potential impact of such behaviors.

The counselor explained that seemingly minor acts of disrespect may be interpreted as signals that person is not valued or respected, and make them feel anxious, like "Is it okay for me to be here?" or "Am I unnecessary?". Such feelings may contribute to mental health issues and resignation.

The counselor also emphasized that individuals perceive situations differently. While some people may find certain behavior upsetting, while others may not be affected. Furthermore, those engaging in such behaviors are often unaware of how their behavior may appear and have no intention of causing harm.

To create an environment where all team members could collaborate comfortably and respectfully, the counselor encouraged Mr.B to consider concrete initiatives.

Mr.B responded: "I would like to take some time to think this through. I will contact you when I have come up with a plan of action."

The counselor concluded the session by conveying support for Mr.B's commitment to create an environment where everyone can work comfortably.

<Subsequent Session>

Several weeks later, Mr. B contacted the counselor and requested another meeting.

Cl: "I shared the concerns we discussed with the three team leaders under my supervision. Initially, their reactions were similar to mine when I first heard these comments during the 1-on-1 interviews. They seemed puzzled and thought I might be 'overthinking' or 'misinterpreting'.

However, when I asked them to observe the workplace themselves, before long they came back and said, 'Just as you said,' and shared a sense of crisis with me."

The team leader's observations revealed additional issues, such as cold attitudes and tones of voice, ways of speaking sounded like blaming, and communication patterns that start with denial such as "But" and "That is impossible."

Based on these findings, the management team began discussing possible interventions. One proposal was to conduct a descriptive survey asking employees:

"Please tell us about behaviors or situation in the workplace that make you uncomfortable."

They also considered developing a checklist based on the survey results and asking all employees to complete a self-check in order to raise awareness.

Co's Intervention: The counselor encouraged Mr.B implementing this effort immediately.

A powerful word came back from Mr. B:"We will roll this out certainly."

The counselor was convinced that Mr.B's awareness and proactive response would help protect the psychological safety of his members and contribute to improve team performance.

The counselor also emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for team members to have interest in colleagues and learn methods to increase the quality and quantity of communication. Conducting meetings and trainings were recommended.

Since "whether one feels unpleasant or not" differs from person to person, the counselor suggested creating opportunities for employees to discuss questions such as:

"Would this comment make someone feel uncomfortable?" And "What kinds of interactions have made you feel appreciate or supported?"

Such discussions can help employees better understand one another's value and perspectives.

By the end of the consultation process, Mr. B seemed to have developed a deeper understanding of issues such as uncivil behavior in the workplace can cause significant psychological harm, contribute to mental health issues, reduce productivity, and increase employee turnover. The session concluded with his words: "Any of us, including myself, might be making others feel unpleasant before knowing it. Through this consultation process, I heartily thought that we must promote an environment where one can feel safe to speak up when something unpleasant or worrisome occurs, together with my subordinates."

<Commentary> This case illustrates workplace incivility.

Incivility refers to low-intensity discourteous and disrespectful behaviors that violate norms of mutual respect but do not necessarily fall under definition of harassment.

After the Power Harassment Prevention Act was fully enforced in Japan in 2022, events that fall under the definition of harassment have come to be handled more appropriately. However, addressing behaviors that fall outside those definitions remains a significant challenge for many workplaces.

Research suggests that when incivility is left unaddressed, it can gradually escalates to serious forms of mistreatment such as harassment and bullying, with a higher possibility of constituting harassment. We hope this article provides an opportunity for readers to review their own words and deeds and the workplace environment.

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Please make an appointment by phone or email.

Type 3: Telephone Counseling

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Please provide the following information when making an appointment.

- | | |
|---|--|
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| ② Company name or registration number | ☐ In person (Tokyo/Osaka counseling office, or another mutually agreed-upon location) |
| ③ Brief description of your concern | ☐ Online (via Microsoft Teams) |
| ④ Preferred date and time for the session | * The types of counseling available may vary depending on your contract. |

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