



Mandurah

Psychological Services



Bunbury

Psychological Services

Your EAP Team



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This month I would like to discuss how to ensure clear boundaries and communication in the workplace, providing some tips and tricks to consider when in the office, the yard, or on site.

As many of us return to work as usual, we may experience conflict which we were mostly able to avoid when working from home. By ensuring clear and effective communication in the workplace we can aim to reduce conflict and maintain well-defined boundaries to help reduce stress and frustrations in our lives.

If you believe you are struggling with your mental health or wellbeing, please consult with your GP or contact us here at Mandurah & Bunbury Psychological Services for an appointment with one of our qualified practitioners who will guide you towards better management of your mental health.

Working with Difficult People

No matter what industry you work in, chances are at some stage you will have to deal with difficult people – whether they are co-workers, clients, customers, or other professionals. Below are some practical tips to use when you encounter difficult people.

- Listen. Everyone wants to feel heard. No progress can take place until the other person feels acknowledged.
- Don't judge. You don't know what the other person is going through. If a person is acting unreasonable, they are likely feeling some sort of vulnerability or fear.
- Look for the hidden need. What is this person trying to gain? What might this person trying to avoid?
- Stay calm. When a situation is emotionally charged, it's easy to get caught up in the heat of the moment. Monitor your breathing. Try to take some slow, deep breaths. This will help to calm your body and mind.
- Don't act defensively. This can be tough, but if the other person is showing increased emotions, it's not going to help. Focus on listening to what the other person has to say, use assertive communication to minimize the chance of escalating the situation.
- Debrief. After the situation is over, talk to a trusted person about what happened. This is a good way to discharge the pressure built from a stressful situation.

Using Assertive Communication in the Workplace

Being assertive when communicating with others is a skill which requires some practice to become comfortable and confident with. Some of us may be uncomfortable with being assertive, either due to lack of practice, wanting to escape further conflict, or wishing to avoid coming across as aggressive.

Assertiveness and aggression may appear similar, but they have a distinct difference. Using assertiveness helps us to stand up for our own rights without infringing on the rights of others. On the other hand, aggression typically does not seek to maintain the rights of others.

State your needs unapologetically: Do not provide multiple excuses when declaring your needs. For example, when asking for time off, do not provide multiple reasons such you have been busy with family issues. Instead, just firmly ask for time off and say you will be ready to resume working hard when you return.

Don't make the mistake of accepting responsibility for how people react to your assertiveness. If they, for example, act angrily or resentful toward you, try to avoid reacting to them in the same way.

Remember that you can only control yourself and your own behaviour, so do your best to stay calm and respectful if things get tense.

Keep the focus on yourself, instead of on your coworker: use sentences like "I work better when..." instead of "You need to stop...". Use "I want", "I need" or "I feel" to convey basic assertions and get your point across firmly.

Using assertive communication can lead to others learning and respecting your personal boundaries. Think about what you can realistically expect of yourself and respect your limitations. This may lead to a decrease in work-related stress and frustration.



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