

Insight

An e-newsletter for leaders from your Aurora Employee Assistance Program

Navigating Turbulent Times, while Maintaining Respect and Camaraderie in the Workplace

In these super-charged times in which we live, tensions surrounding political and other hot-button issues run high. Whether it's political divisiveness or other uncertainties, many employees today are dealing with **increased levels of stress and concern**. These feelings can spill over and impact the workplace. Effective managers, who know their policies inside and out, will be prepared to intervene, if needed.

Workplace disagreements surrounding political and social issues may result in **passionate disagreements** among employees. Leaders should be ready to handle any interpersonal conflicts that may arise. Managers must be prepared to enforce their companies' policies on workplace interactions — and hold employees accountable for maintaining them.



Cultivating a Healthy Workplace Culture

Focusing on maintaining a respectful, compassionate workplace is often more effective than outright banning all talk about politics or other sensitive issues. The goal is to create a workplace where people get along and support each other's ability to work. It's helpful to remind employees that **their organization respects all different points of view**. Companies shouldn't limit healthy dialogue among coworkers, but they do have a vested interest in reducing disruptions and maintaining a workplace culture of mutual respect.

Setting Ground Rules

To head off hot words or altercations, managers should ensure that team members are fully aware of their company's policy on appropriate employee interactions. Managers should know when an employee interaction has violated a stated behavioral expectation. Such policies should detail when a heated or angry discussion crosses a company line (examples: shouting, hurling insults or ridiculing other coworkers). Managers who know their policies inside and out will be better prepared to intervene and discipline, if needed.

A well-drafted and regularly communicated policy can go a long way in reminding employees of their obligation to comply. It's important to remind employees that the workplace is an environment where everyone should feel safe, welcomed, and respected. This common-sense approach applies to a company's remote workforce, too.

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For more information, please call Aurora EAP at 1-800-236-3231.

Maintain a Human Connection with Remote Workers

Employers are encouraged to host new-hire introductions, via video conferencing, for remote workers joining the organization. This is an opportunity for everyone to greet the new person, have face time and get to know a little bit about the new employee. Having employees keep their video cameras turned on during meetings helps everyone stay focused and promotes familiarity among team members.

Regular communication helps **remote workers stay engaged** with the organization. A remote workforce should receive all regular company communications so they are kept in the communication loop.

Encouraging Camaraderie Among Remote Workers

Virtually celebrating workplace accomplishments or promotions can be a useful tool in building camaraderie with a remote workforce. Managers can also celebrate remote workers' birthdays and work anniversaries through video conferencing.

A handwritten note (instead of a quick text or email) from an employee's manager or company leader can serve as a strong reminder that the organization values them. Sending a small "care package" (examples: coffee cup, shirt or other company swag) helps keep the company foremost in the minds of remote workers.



Encourage Virtual 'Water Cooler' Interactions

Onsite employees benefit from informal "water cooler" conversations that allow them to connect over casual conversations and work together more effectively. However, for remote workers it's difficult to have impromptu conversations that happen organically.

Encouraging **"virtual" water cooler conversations** (or virtual coffee or lunch breaks) can create a similar dynamic where employees can chat informally. Some employers have set up specialized online channels for chat and collaboration. This allows both remote and onsite employees to connect with each other and build camaraderie as a single, blended workforce.

LEADERSHIP

Being a leader during high-stress, uncertain times is challenging. If company leaders are struggling to handle day-to-day issues with their subordinates, professional advice and assistance is available from Aurora EAP Account Executives.

For more information, please call Aurora EAP at 1-800-236-3231.