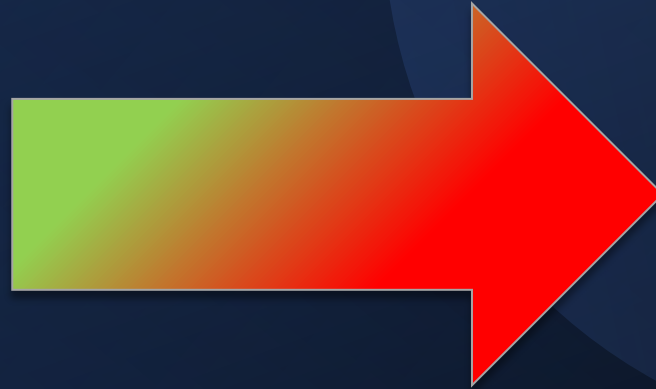


The Continuum of Behaviors



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For SRE Network



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*Strategic and Respectful Approaches
to Contemporary Workplace Issues*

The Continuum of Behavior

- Emphasizes the need to be deliberate and specific in building a culture of respect and safety
- Fear and futility fill in the organizational spaces that are not cultivating healthy culture
- In the best of worlds, most of our conversations should be about what we are doing and can do to actively nourish the best possible workplace climate.
- Today, however, we will journey across a continuum of ways that respect and safety can be derailed, and strategies to address each stage.

Continuum of Workplace Behavior

Microinequities and Boundary Slippage

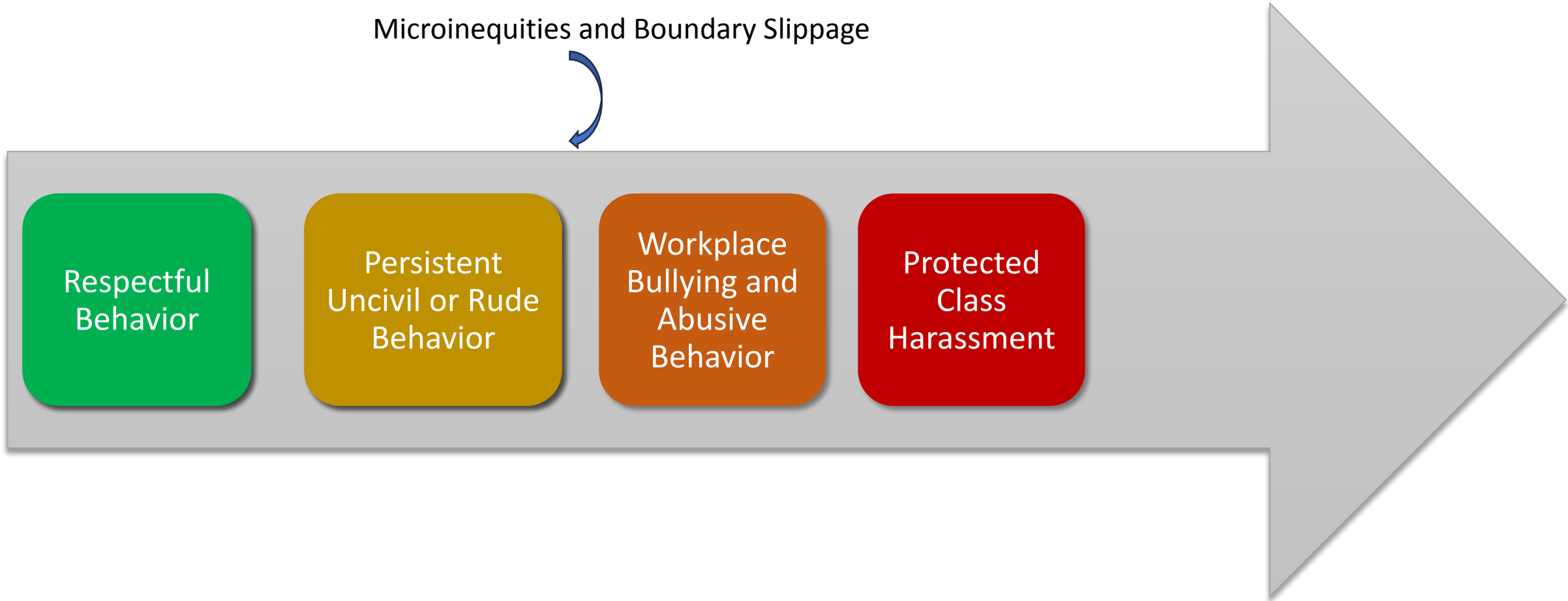


Respectful
Behavior

Persistent
Uncivil or Rude
Behavior

Workplace
Bullying and
Abusive
Behavior

Protected
Class
Harassment



Respectful Behavior

- Norms and practices that create a level playing field
- Earning and giving an assumption of positive intention
- Maintaining boundaries on time, space, emotions
- Affirmation of contributions and strengths
- Valuing feelings and their views, even without agreeing
- Offering help, listening, seeking opinions
- Showing interest

Case Study:Framing Information

- The most visible program of the Acme organization is its 501 (c) 4 lobbying effort, the face of which is Manya.
- This case study will introduce various versions of Manya that tie to the continuum.

Respectful Behavior

Manya is known as a fearless leader who takes new recruits into the field with support and acceptance. Her practices include an onboarding for political action interns that identifies Capitol Hill norms and beliefs, assigning people to work together on small, but attainable goals, and having weekly debriefs where everyone is encouraged to share learning, rather than accomplishments. She is particularly attentive to the interns building a support system among themselves and sets aside time to share her own stories of “learning the trade.” She is accessible and makes a point of spending time in the field with each intern individually, noticing their strengths and coaching them on developing their personal style of advocacy.

Respectful Behavior

- Create explicit norms
- Relentlessly practice feedback
- Give opportunities for voice
- Individuate
- Build relationships
- Reward candor
- Reward reflection

Perceptions of respect and psychological safety tie robustly to organizational performance, organizational learning, and early reporting of unethical or other problematic behavior

Intervention Strategies

Persistent Rude and Uncivil Behavior

Persistent Uncivil or Rude Behavior

- Cumulatively affects the mental health and behavior of those targeted and those who observe it
- Is contagious
- Creates pain analogous to physical pain
- Reduces cooperation, helping behavior, trust, and organizational engagement
- Predicts and increased likelihood of bullying or unlawful harassment
- Needs to be evaluated with an equity lens

Silencing Behaviors

- Persistent interrupting
- Condescension or perfectionism
- Ignoring or minimizing attempts to contribute
- Raised voice used to press a point of view
- Failing to acknowledge alternate views or perspectives
- Directing questions to specific individuals regardless of skill or expertise
- Trivializing contributions
- Insulting or dismissing knowledge or expertise
- Creating “insider” and “outsider” narratives (i.e. “You wouldn’t understand because you’re new here.”)
- Forcing perspectives/resisting facilitation
- Physical aggression (pounding table, leaning over someone, clenching fists)
- Selectively withholding attention

Persistent Rude or Uncivil Behavior

- Manya is a legendary lobbyist with a track record of success on issues from Israel to local food sourcing. Manya takes time with new recruits to let them know of her **high expectations** – being successful at lobbying means being present, being aware, and being sociable. She notices when someone falls short on any of these dimensions. She is not hesitant to criticize someone’s outfit, their less aggressive demeanor, or their failing to be in the right place at the right time. Manya describes herself as “**tough but fair,**” and identifies “**winners**” and “**losers**” quickly, giving attention and support to the former, and declaring her limited bandwidth for the others. Even her own leaders cringe at Manya’s “constructive feedback,” but they recognize her success, her relationships, and her experience as vital to the organization.

Persistent
Uncivil or
Rude
Behavior

Intervention Strategies

- In the moment interventions: Deflect, Disrupt, Support, Call In, Call Out
- Facilitate team norm-setting/ground rules
- Provide progressive feedback and coaching – assume good will at first
 - Articulate a connection between interpersonal effectiveness and performance assessment
 - Itemize the “ledger” of contributions and damages in any coaching conversations and performance conversations
 - Measure whether there is a willingness to make change
 - Identify behavioral steps to modify behavior
- Support and permission for target coping strategies

Workplace
Bullying and
Abusive Behavior

Repeated , targeted mistreatment of one or more persons (targets) by one or more persons (bullies) that involve one or more of the following elements:

- verbal abuse
- physical intimidation
- infliction of psychological distress, including humiliation
- sabotage of Work
- digital or social media harassment

Which interferes with the quality of the target's work product or their ability to perform their job

Bullying or Abusive Behavior

Everyone knows Manya is incredibly effective, has indirectly raised millions of dollars and successfully advances the organization's policy agenda, but everyone also knows to steer clear of Manya when she is just coming back from vacation, is on a deadline, or someone has disappointed her. Manya is known to **brutally insult people**, pointing out that they are weak, lazy, or ignorant. Sometimes she says this directly to someone. At other times she will pass these opinions up the chain. If Manya is unhappy with someone, she will "**ice them out,**" and not respond to questions or requests for assistance, rendering them less effective. There are frequently **tears or anger** among Manya's interns, which everyone knows is part of the job. No one is happy with this, but it is what it is.

Intervention Strategies

Workplace Bullying and Abusive Behavior

- Adopt a policy that parallels unlawful conduct policy, including a clear definition and carve outs for performance management and discipline
- Train supervisors and managers in effective performance management and hold accountable to standards
- Seek underlying triggers and root causes, where appropriate, and consider restructuring role or responsibilities (i.e. remove supervisory responsibilities)
- Use discipline and performance management tools
- Three-part intervention
 - Taking Responsibility
 - Tangible Employment Consequences
 - Supportive Coaching

Bullying creates a climate of fear and mistrust, affects the health of all persons in the workplace, Has no redeeming impact- fear is an ineffective motivator. At worst, it affects the employment brand and the integrity of organizational mission.

Gateway Behaviors to Protected Class Harassment

Protected Class Harassment

- Positive attention for appearance, conforming to stereotypes or deviating from stereotypes
- Boundary-crossing humor
- Assuming a level of familiarity or intimacy that is not based in fact
- Negative gossip regarding colleagues or superiors
- Explicit references to one's power, status, or authority to leverage compliance with requests or demands
- Marked difference in demeanor towards a group based on gender or gender identity or presentation

Protected Class Harassment

Manya is a big personality who builds her success by establishing social and policy relationships across denominations and the political spectrum. Working with Manya is challenging. She is not particularly helpful or empathetic but expects junior staff to follow her lead and to learn by example. Manya expects her people to be **loyal**, and she is prone to **share negative or salacious gossip about other professionals**, both within and outside the organization. Manya reminds people that **she can do a lot for their career** if they stick with her. In a meeting to discuss the aftermath of a recent compromise Manya and other advocates made with opponents, Manya remarked, “Life is tough and sometimes you just need to lie there and take it.” A junior staff member who was present was **shocked, but, afraid of retaliation**, waited over 2 months before confiding this in a senior staff person who immediately reported the remark.

Intervention Strategies

Protected
Class
Harassment

- Prompt Assessment of Complaint
- Interim Actions to Prevent Recurrence
- Investigation
- Remedial and or Punitive Actions

In addition to all the negative consequences identified for other continuum behavior, Protected class harassment is unlawful and can result in claims and charges against the organization And individual leaders.

What to Do When the Problem is a Leader

- Engage organizational leadership to invest in culture-building activities (remembering that teams are the most salient places to build safety)
- Find authoritative truth-tellers in the organization that will take the morally correct stance of intervention
- Do not “take bullets” for subordinates. It is not sustainable and perpetuates/gives tacit approval to abusive conduct
- Assess your own mental health and stamina and release yourself from “mission velcro.” The cost of sticking to a toxic environment is too high

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