Addressing a Worker’s Anger

Managers are required to deal with workers who exhibit anger in the workplace, especially given the negative impact this can have on other workers, productivity, and overall workplace morale. Some managers choose to ignore infrequent or low-intensity demonstrations of anger. In relatively trivial cases, this may be the best approach, because occasional anger is natural, may not be evidence of a problem, and may have no lasting effect on the workplace. High-intensity or frequent angry outbursts represent a different issue. Here are a few tips to consider, where appropriate, on how to address workers who regularly or intensely express anger:

1. **Hold the conversation at a time of relative calm:** This is not a response to use in the midst of escalated emotion or anger. (For additional information [www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com](http://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com) ➔ Leadership/Management ➔ Prevention & Crisis Response)

2. **Express your intention to help:** Let them know that you want to help and work with them to help ensure a respectful and safe work environment for all.

3. **Discuss observed changes:** Start by letting them know that you’ve observed changes in their behaviour. Identify the time period in which you’ve made these observations. Be specific and objective in describing the behaviour you have seen, and avoid making assumptions or laying blame (as this will likely just lead to defensiveness).

4. **Point out the impact of their behaviour:** Describe the negative impact their behaviour is having on others.

5. **Ask about contributing factors:** Ask if any workplace factors may be contributing to their anger.

6. **Take a problem-solving approach:** Work to identify and problem-solve any contributing factors. Try to agree upon immediate strategies for minimizing the impact of anger on others.

7. **Establish boundaries:** Be direct in describing acceptable vs. unacceptable workplace behaviours. This can be particularly important if the worker is engaging in disrespectful, uncivil, bullying, harassing or otherwise abusive behaviours (toward managers, workers or clients/customers). Remain unapologetic in your expression of behaviours that must change.

8. **Set a time for follow-up:** Establish a time period in which you will expect to see changes. Agree on a plan and ensure you schedule a follow-up time to check in with the worker.