Exercise: Using Different Means to the Same End

In the workplace setting, we often have very clear ‘ends’ (goals or outcomes) that we are working toward (e.g., effective completion or delivery of a range of tasks and responsibilities). When a worker we are managing is distressed, our own stress level may increase, because we feel that the ends toward which we are working are being threatened. This can lead us to approach emotionally charged situations in what we believe is generically the most effective or appropriate manner. This may mean, however, that we have given little thought to whether the approach is the most effective or appropriate approach for that individual. It may be that the same situation can be approached in multiple ways, all working toward the same desired end. The best strategy is almost always to approach situations differently based on the specific workers involved.

Think about the range of different ways in which you could approach an employee in the following situations:

You overhear a worker speaking disrespectfully to a customer on the telephone.
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You see a worker – who should be working on an urgent deadline – repeatedly checking their Facebook account throughout the day.
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You observe a worker who is leaving the staff lunch room teary-eyed.
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Reflect on the factors you take into consideration when deciding how to approach specific workers.