



Supervising Unprofessional Behavior

Each of us is capable of unprofessional behavior, and at some time in our career, we have all acted unprofessionally. The hope is that we grow, and as we grow, unprofessional behavior happens less and less. But what happens when the people we work with or supervise behave unprofessionally?

If a peer or fellow worker is acting unprofessionally, it is not your place to correct them. If their behavior is more than unprofessional, if it is focused on a person or group of people, it is well within your right to firmly, and clearly, tell them it is not ok to treat others in this manner. Ignoring bullying of any form encourages the bully to continue to act this way. The only way to stop the bully, is to stand up to them. Never do this if your safety is at risk. Always report this behavior and work to support and protect the victim.

If the behavior is simply unprofessional, place distance between yourself and the unprofessional behavior. Remember, we are judged by the company we keep, and we do not want the bad behavior of another person to ruin our reputation. When you must engage with them, remember, you are under no obligation to be friends with your coworkers, you simply must be professional and respectful. You can walk away and choose to ignore their behavior. If provoked, remember, the higher road is always the best choice, no matter how difficult it is.

If you are the supervisor, you must address the unprofessional behavior immediately. However, before you can chide an employee, you must first make sure you are setting a good example. As a supervisor, you must strive for professionalism in every situation regardless of how you would like to act. As difficult as it can be, you should never be friends with those you supervise. Friendships can blur lines and boundaries, placing you in a difficult situation.

When unprofessional behavior happens in a group setting, it is important to remember this is not always the place to address it. Often the best approach is to redirect the conversation, monitoring it to ensure the unprofessional behavior does not happen again. After the conversation is completed, address the behavior privately.

Your peers and employees are watching you. How you choose to respond will set the tone for the office.