



Addressing Challenging Behaviors

TACTIC

RESPONSE

Sympathy—attempts to create sympathy, pity, remorse, guilt, and/or shame by focusing on how much hardship you are causing the individual.

Express concern, but do not probe. Refer individual to EAP. Remain focused on job performance issues.

Denial—outright refusal of the action or behavior in question. May be done passively or overtly with hostility and/or indignation.

Use your documentation. Stand by the validity of the findings of your investigation. Do not debate, argue, or concede.

Minimizing—either the extent of, involvement in, or the seriousness of a situation.

Use your documentation (see above). Use your policies and procedures to reinforce expected behavior and the seriousness of violations. Site consequences of the behavior in objective terms, e.g., dollar loss.

Personal attacks—designed to put you on the defensive, personal attacks may impugn your position, employer, actions, intelligence, compassion, or friendship.

Remain calm. Do not retaliate nor defend yourself. Do not respond with anger. Acknowledge the individual's feelings without validating them (e.g., "I'm sorry you feel that way, but we need to discuss your performance").

Threats—like personal attacks, threats are designed to put you on the defensive. These may be veiled or explicit, and vary from minor to life threatening.

Take all threats seriously. Immediately report the threat to the proper authorities within your company. Take appropriate additional disciplinary action.

Invoking others—attempts to defuse responsibility for or severity of behavior by claiming it is common among others.

Stay focused on the individual at hand. Acknowledge the person's perception without validating it (e.g., "perhaps we have other problems, but you and I need to focus on your situation ...").

Bargaining—promises which the employee offers in lieu of appropriate disciplinary action.

Do not accept promises. Hold the employee accountable for expected outcomes. Remain focused on the performance problem and your relevant policies.