



## **Workplace Rights, Responsibilities, Health, and Safety**

### **I. Rights And Responsibilities In The Workplace**

**Rights:** things about which there is widespread or general agreement that people are free or entitled to do, expect or have. Examples of rights are every person's right to life, innate freedom and equality, freedom of thought and expression and right to privacy.

**Responsibilities:** things about which there is widespread or general agreement that people can be expected to do. Examples of responsibilities include obeying the laws of the land, paying taxes, not infringing the rights of others and being honest and truthful.

In most parts of the world, employees have the following **basic rights**:

1. The right to work in a healthy and safe environment physically and emotionally;
2. The right to adequate rest time;
3. The right to some amount of paid vacation time;
4. The right to fixed and predictable working hours;
5. The right to be provided with essential work tools; and
6. The right to not be unfairly dismissed.

### **II. Being Responsible**

Behaving responsibly is just as important for being a successful professional in the workplace. There are five key aspects to behaving responsibly.

- Honesty
- Empathy/respect
- Fairness
- Accountability
- Courage

#### **HONESTY**

Honesty is when you speak the truth and act truthfully. Honesty is not just about telling the truth. It is also about being truthful in your actions and being real with yourself and others about who you are and what you want. Honest people take responsibility for their own actions and change when needed.

#### **COMPASSION AND RESPECT**

Compassionate people treat others with kindness and understanding. They have empathy (can put themselves in the other person's shoes) and are slow to pass judgment on others. They accept that people are different and try hard to build bridges.



## **FAIRNESS**

Fair people treat others the way they want to be treated. Fair people consider the needs and feelings of others and do not give special treatment to one group at the expense of another.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Being accountable means owning up to your mistakes. It's accepting the consequences for your choices and actions rather than complaining or trying to blame others. Blaming others for things you are responsible for is dishonest, unkind and unfair. Being accountable is also about thinking about how your decisions and actions affect you and others. Accountability is also doing what you say you will when you say you will.

## **COURAGE**

Doing what you believe to be the right thing, especially when it is difficult or unpopular takes courage. You have to be brave to try something new, go against norms, and do what you think is right, especially when everyone else is telling you differently. Courageous people stay true to themselves and their values and are willing to call out the wrong or harmful things that other people do and to hold them accountable.

### SCENARIO 1

You work as an office assistant for a busy office. Your co-worker puts in long hours—sometimes even going in on the weekends. One day, you catch him taking home office supplies – pens, paper, and staplers. He tells you that no one at work will even notice they're missing. "It's just office supplies," he says. "People do it all the time." Besides, he feels that he deserves a few perks after how hard he works. What do you think? Do you tell him to stop? Do you tell your boss?

### SCENARIO 2

Your friend confides in you that his boss has been criticizing him in front of other staff. He is ready to quit his job at the school because he has a family to support. What would you advise him to do?

### SCENARIO 3

You applied for a job in a furniture store to work in the kitchen department. In the interview the owner introduces you to his son who is in charge of the kitchen department. On the first day of work his son told you to not tag prices on items and that when you see customers who look well off to raise the prices of items. Should you just obey your boss's son? What should you do?

## **III. Physical Safety**



Being physically safe at work is important, and, as previously discussed, is your right. Obviously, some jobs are inherently more dangerous than others and include many hazards. A hazard is anything that can cause harm or have some other negative effect. Hazards can be substances like chemicals, objects like cords or sharp objects, practices like working on a ladder or drilling holes.

Examples:

- Soldier
- Police
- Carpenter
- Truck driver
- Builder
- Mechanics

What kinds of mechanisms might be in place to prevent accidents in the workplace? You can see them in the following video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZs5BzyRkTc>

#### **IV. Workplace Emotional Abuse**

A safe and healthy workplace is not only one that is free of unnecessary physical risks and hazards. A safe workplace is also one where you are not at risk of being emotionally or sexually harassed or abused and where you are not harassing other people.

Emotional abuse can be common in workplaces because of competition, power dynamics, and it is where people spend most of their time working closely with others. Despite its prevalence, emotional abuse is not acceptable and limits the safety and productivity of the workplace.

It is important to understand the types of abuse to know how to protect yourself and respond, but also to avoid being the abuser.

#### **V. Dealing With Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment can be of four main types:

- 1. PHYSICAL CONDUCT:** This includes any and all unwanted physical contact. It can range from simply touching someone in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable to sexual assault and rape.
- 2. VERBAL HARASSMENT:** There are many examples of verbal sexual harassment including: Unwelcome sexual innuendo, suggestions and hints
- 3. SEXUAL ADVANCES;** Comments with sexual overtones;
- 4. SEX-RELATED JOKES OR INSULTS;** Unwelcome sexually graphic comments about a person's body or appearance; Inappropriate enquiries about a person's sex life, and



Unwelcome whistling directed at a person or group of persons. If someone says that any of the above are unwelcome or make them feel uncomfortable, it constitutes sexual harassment.