



## Managing Counterproductive Behavior

Counterproductive behaviors are those behaviors that tend to work against one's success in an organization. They may be mild or severe, chronic or acute. The role of the manager is to notice the behavior and proactively respond to it as soon as possible. If the person behaving negatively is your employee, letting these behaviors fester can damage your reputation and that of your employee.

What are some examples of counterproductive behavior in the workplace?

- Bullying
- Back-stabbing
- Shouting
- Acting out
- Showing favoritism
- Ostracizing someone
- Displaying negativity
- Stirring the pot
- Rumor spreading
- Taking advantage of someone
- Not listening
- Complaining
- Withdrawing
- Not getting along with people

Does this remind you of high school? Unfortunately, most counterproductive behavior could be labeled as "immature" behavior as well. Often people who display counterproductive behavior are intelligent and competent, but fall back on old patterns without thinking. They may lack emotional intelligence and maturity. They may have come from a family where these types of behaviors were common, or from a work environment where high school-like behavior was tolerated. Perhaps there is an underlying personal problem and these behaviors are employed as a coping mechanism. Whatever the reason, the manager's role is to notice it, provide feedback, and set appropriate limits to extinguish the behavior as soon as possible.

When you notice counterproductive behavior, follow the five-step formula:

**Step 1:** Recognize the problem. Don't turn your back on it.

**Step 2:** Document examples to help you in your discussion.

**Step 3:** Discuss performance. Explain how the employee's behavior has impacted you or others, and how it affects co-workers if it continues.



**Step 4:** Consider a referral to the EAP. As a manager, or supervisor, you can call the EAP to discuss your situation. Since there may be personal issues affecting the employee, be sure to mention the availability of the EAP for confidential counseling.

**Step 5:** Monitor progress and provide feedback. Be consistent in your feedback until the behavior is extinguished.

Once the counterproductive behavior is eliminated, the employee may not be “home free”. Some damage may have been done in terms of group cohesiveness. If the employee is a manager of a group, team morale and performance or interpersonal communications may have been affected. An employee may, upon facing the reality of the impact of his or her counterproductive behavior, realize the need for individualized coaching for more long-term permanent results. Consider other components of the KGA Family of Services such as Coaching, Training, Team Building, and other interventions to get the employee and his or her team back on track.

Although confronting problem behavior is one of the more difficult manager tasks, the rewards can be great. Seeing a difficult employee become a productive employee can be a very gratifying supervisory experience.

The EAP can be reached at 1-800-648-9557.