



# Brown Bagger HANDOUT

## Tips for diffusing a hostile situation:

- Be aware of yourself. If you are uncomfortable handling the situation, get help.
- Stay clam. Situations are much more likely to escalate if both parties get emotional.
- Look at proxemics. Your body language, tone of voice, and each person's personal space can send a message. Make sure you are aware of the message you send by non-verbal communication.
- Acknowledge the individual respectfully.
- Speak privately if possible. DO NOT, however, take an aggressive person to an isolated location where you will be unable to get help if needed.
- Listen to the persons concerns. Let them know that you are listening.
- Don't impose your personal values on the person. ("You shouldn't feel that way", etc.)
- Paraphrase. This lets the person know you are listening and trying to understand them.
- Offer to provide help.
- Verbalize your concerns factually.
- Let the person know your boundaries.
- Step away from the situation if you can, if the individual continues to escalate.
- Get help if you need it. Look out for each other.
- Document the facts of the incident.

What other approaches might you try?

---



---



---



---



---

Most employers have Violence and Threat Prevention Policies. Be familiar with your organizations workplace policy. Under this policy, employees often have a number of responsibilities. Knowing up front what they are can help you react most effectively. Employee responsibilities may include some or all of the following:

- Remove yourself from the threat as soon as possible
- Obtain emergency police/security intervention and medical attention if needed
- Notify manager immediately if you are involved in a situation
- Document the incident (many organizations will provide an incident report form)
- Assist the manager in completing Assault/Threat report and Injury report
- Cooperate with the investigation of the incident.

It is important to document any aggressive or violent situations that arise in our workplace. Documentation serves two purposes. First, it provides a record of the incident and is necessary in determining the outcome or response to the incident. Second, documentation can help us to review the situation and give insight into alternative approaches to dealing with the situation. The process of putting together documentation can also help us begin the process of debriefing. This is important in effectively dealing with the situation and coping with it in a healthy way. Failure to debrief and get needed support can lead to burnout and possible mental health problems.

What is your company's policy? What are the employees' responsibilities?

---



---



---



---



---

*Some final thoughts....*

There are many effective ways to address aggression in the workplace. Safety of the premises is one area that can also have a great impact. If employees have individual offices, care should be taken to furnish offices giving the employee the opportunity for an escape route should they be confronted by a violent co-worker or customer. Care and attention in the physical set up of the organization can prevent opportunity for violence against any particular person. Parking lots and external lighting are also important. Can an employee leave the building and safely get to their car to leave the premises? Are doors locked after business hours? Does your organization have a security system? Who keeps track of individuals entering and leaving your business? Something as simple as a visitors log at your public entrance can be very effective.

The atmosphere in which you work is full of challenges, deadlines, pressures and uncertainties. We need to learn to cope effectively with these challenges and we need to understand how to deal with individuals who cannot deal effectively with these challenges. A professional atmosphere that is based on respect and consideration is a good foundation for a safe workplace.