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College Africa Group – Tough Topics: Talking to Employees about Personal Hygiene

As a manager, you're probably used to dealing with tough situations: employees who insist on being late, team members who miss deadlines, and staff members who can't get along. But conversations about an employee's personal appearance are a whole different ball game. It's something that we often avoid talking about, or worse, make light of.

This one-day workshop has two major themes. First, we'll give you a framework for having those tough conversations. We'll also give you some guidelines for customising that framework for your organisation. Then, we'll look at some common tough conversations that come up, including body odor, flatulence, poor clothing and hair decisions, and bad breath. At the end of the workshop participants will have a chance to role play a tough situation. You'll walk away well prepared for any kind of challenging conversation.

This one-day workshop will help you teach participants how to:

- Identify the advantages to having tough conversations
- Describe the components to an effective behavior modification conversation
- Use your organisation's resources to help you deal with hygiene issues
- Overcome barriers that employees put up when discussing hygiene problems
- Resolve hygiene issues such as bad hair days, inappropriate piercings and body art, poor clothing choices, bad breath, body odor, excessive gas, and incontinence
- Nip poor hygiene habits in the bud
- Identify ways to encourage good hygiene at your workplace

Let's Talk About It!

To start the day, participants will look at some of the personal and professional benefits of investing their time and energy into a tough conversation.

Guidelines for Difficult Conversations

This session will give participants a framework for any difficult conversation and a chance to role play ways to open the conversation. Participants will also receive a checklist of company policies that they should familiarise themselves with.

Overcoming Objections

Next, participants will role play what to do if the employee becomes offended, won't admit that they have a problem, refuses to fix the problem (or fixes it only temporarily), or claims that the issue is due to a disability.

Bad Hair Days (And Weeks... and Months...)

This session will focus on solutions for unkempt hair, unprofessional hairstyles, and dandruff.

Addressing Piercings and Body Artwork

In this session, participants will learn some good ways to bring up and resolve issues with inappropriate body piercings and tattoos.

Helping Employees Dress for Success

Next, participants will learn how to deal with dress code violations, with a special section on issues that could be gender-sensitive. Participants will also receive some useful tips on helping employees who don't have the resources to dress appropriately.

Bad Breath

This session will explore the causes of bad breath (formally known as halitosis), how to resolve it, and how to discuss it with employees.

Body Odor

Next, participants will brainstorm ways to handle inadequate personal hygiene, body odor from medical issues, and over-perfumed employees. We'll also take a quick look at what to do if you think you smell drugs or alcohol on an employee.

Gastrointestinal Issues

This session will look at discussing incontinence and flatulence with an employee.

Bad Habits

Finally, participants will make a list of their favorite poor hygiene habits and brainstorm solutions for them.

Putting it into Practice

In the last session of the day, participants will role play a difficult hygiene situation and receive feedback on how they handled the situation.

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