

Developing a Respectful Work Environment



when *life* works better,
business works better

Pai ake te oranga, pai ake te pakihi

On entering a respectful work environment, we experience an atmosphere of fairness and collaboration. Adopting this quality as a core value we are more able to achieve our business goals and reputation for excellence. Embracing the concept of a respectful workplace requires a commitment to respecting each other regardless of position, roles and responsibilities.

A respectful work environment requires protocols and principles to be put into action by the people who make up the teams with whom we work. No matter how small or large teams may be, following these protocols requires constant, individual attention to maintain a satisfactory level of respect.

We all have individual personality traits along with social and cultural influences, so treating all people equally can seem like a daunting task, especially when we experience differences or conflict.

Simple, everyday communication skills go a long way toward creating an environment where people feel relaxed enough to accomplish their work in a fulfilling way.

Simple communication can include;

- greeting people in a kind way
- asking an "open question" such as "How was your weekend"
- listening to their response
- reflecting back something of what you hear which helps the other know you have listened

All of this takes a little time and requires conscious effort. Taking this time will have long term benefits for everyone in the team.

Body language, tone of voice and timing of conversations all contribute to developing a culture of respect. Modelling these attributes will have direct and indirect positive influences, not to mention making your own day much less stressful.

When there are conflicts it's much better to try to communicate what's troubling you, in the first instance with the person concerned by making use of "I statements" i.e. "I feel worried when you behave that way because it seems disrespectful". If this kind of communication seems to make things worse than letting the person know as calmly as possible that you intend to ask for assistance from a Manager or HR will assist in the communication process.

Using "You statements" in a critical way will cause people to react defensively. Imagine someone saying, "You never arrive at work on time...." Of course, you will react defensively. So best to reframe such a comment into an "I statement".

As the old saying goes, "treat others as you would want to be treated yourself". So, remember putting this into action can be tricky under pressure.

Take your time, breathe easily, choose your moment, be aware of your posture and speak politely, in a calm way.

When you need to consult on an issue, or you think you will benefit from further coaching in these skills contact one of our professionals on <http://www.vitae.co.nz/contact/counselling-form/>

If you need some support or are feeling overwhelmed by anxiety you can contact a Vitae Clinician by phoning 0508 664 981 or email The Vitae Team