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Effective Strategies to Address Workplace Incivility

Incivility and the Work Environment

- Recognized and written about in the literature

- Known by many names; bullying, toxic environment, workplace hostility and others

- Creates personal and professional harm

Workplace Incivility Defined

The American Nurses Association states that Workplace Hostility (or bullying) is

"Repeated, unwanted harmful actions intended to humiliate, offend and cause distress"

(Nursing World, 2015, p. 1)

Workplace Incivility Defined

Low-intensity deviant behavior …..

        rude

        discourteous

        lack of regard for others

        intent to harm

        lack for mutual respect

        violation of norms

(Andersson & Pearson, 1999)

Inappropriate Behaviors

- Condescending body language
  - Arm crossing
  - Eye rolling
  - Refusing to listen
  - Walking away
  - Intentional exclusion of other

- Inattention while others are speaking
  - Texting
  - Reading e-mail
  - Looking away

- Verbal Abuse
  - Belittling
  - Harmful sarcasm
  - Marginalizing others
  - Profanity
  - Threats
  - Gossip

- Non-verbal language
  - Snorting
  - Drumming of fingers
  - Lack of eye contact

(Clark, 2017; Clark , 2018)

Influence of Incivility Personally and in the Work Environment

- **Organizational Harm**

    Patient Safety

    Employee Engagement/ Retention

    Increase in employee sick days and turnover

    Decrease in employee loyalty and support

- **Personal/ Professional Harm**

    Negative affect on physical health

    Adverse influence on mental well-being, self-confidence and creativity

    Damaged self-esteem/confidence/ competence

    Loss of creativity

Physical Effects of Workplace Incivility

Chronic stress releases stress hormones
- Epinephrine (adrenaline)
- Norepinephrine
- Cortisol

Cortisol causes weight gain, osteoporosis, digestive problems, hormone imbalances, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, negative impact on the adrenal glands

(Bradberry, 2017)

Effects of Stress on the Brain

A few days of stress: Compromises the effectiveness of neurons in the hippocampus, the area responsible for reasoning and memory

Weeks of stress: reversible damage to brain cells

Months of stress: can permanently destroy brain cells

(Bradberry, 2017)

Managing Uncivil Behaviors

Management of conflict and incivility is built on relationships

There are many relationship theories and models in the literature
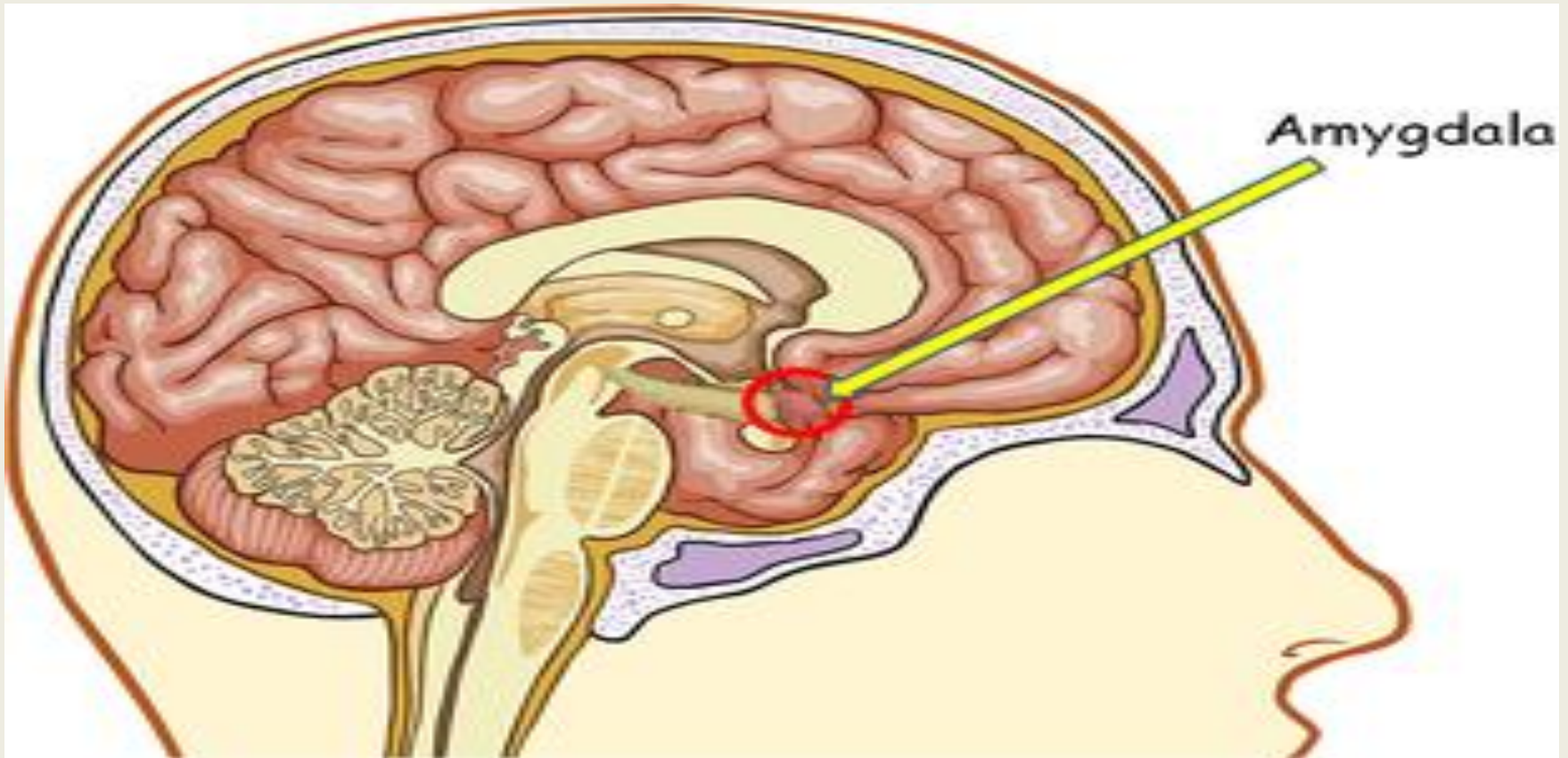
Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotional Intelligence Defined

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others,

and the ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships

(Bradberry, 2017)

EI and the Brain

(http://brainmadesimple.com/amygdala.html)

EI and the Brain

Brain Stem: Involuntary functions/Fight or Flight/can take control of actions when it perceives a threat

Limbic System/ Amygdala: Processes emotions and memories

Frontal Lobe: Responsible for reasoning, planning, parts of speech, movement, some emotions and problem solving

Key to Emotional Control

Use all pieces of the brain together to understand and solve problems most effectively

Recognize when the autonomic reflexes are activated; sweaty palms, heart racing (*brain stem*) ......physically and mentally take a step back and take some slow deep breathes

Limbic System/Amygdala system filters thoughts through our emotional memories –how do we normally react during stress and is that effective? When responding, think before speaking. If you know your emotions are still not in control.... walk away or ask for a few minutes before answering back

Now you can move to the frontal lobe and solve the problem appropriately

Managing Incivility in the Workplace and Classroom Environments

Clark Workplace "Civility Index [Revised]©

Clark's Civility Index For Students and Classmates ©

http://stopbullyingtoolkit.org/Clark-Workplace-Civility-Index.pdf

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A Civil Environment

Establishes group norms in the work place

Creates a safe and supportive place evidenced by mutual trust, respect, and honest feedback

Fosters spirited discussions, debate, and civil discourse grounded in respectful expression; meaning it is ok to agree to disagree (Clark, 2017)

Promotes interdependence, independence, and self-motivation

Creating Civility

Decrease:
- negativity
- gossip
- culture of blaming- use errors as teaching moments
- maintain a zero tolerance for a communication that is unhealthy, disrespectful, or spoken to people other than the persons directly involved

("Leaving a Legacy" toolkit. Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence)

Creating Civility

Role-modeling
      -healthy communication
       -positive reinforcement
       -recognition
       -tact and sensitivity
       -clarifying conversations
       -respecting and valuing other's perspectives
       -tolerance
       -forgiveness

Help stop the cycle of abuse:
Prepare students, new graduates and nurses to recognize the bullying behavior, label it and be empowered to respond

Strategies for Everyone

Personal Responsibility/Accountability

Questions to ask oneself before responding to a conflict:

What part of this issue do I own?

What do I need to apologize for?

If this conversation was videotaped and shown to people I respect, how would I change my reaction?

How can I show compassion towards this person?

(Proverbs 31 Ministry)

Choices

Each of us make choices everyday. Healthy choices are made realizing that we are human and make mistakes

Accepting that we are accountable for our mistakes allows for learning and opportunities to grow

**We have the choice to either be the victim
or
overcome the situation**

Resources for Teaching Nurses Civil Behaviors

http://stopbullyingtoolkit.org

https://www.americannursetoday.com/bullying-toolkit-available/

http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/practicing-language-civility-civil-discourse-and

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Resources for Teaching Nurses Civil Behaviors

https://learningtoforgive.com/research/effects-of-group-forgiveness-intervention-on-perceived-stress-state-and-trait-anger-symptoms-of-stress-self-reported-health-and-forgiveness-stanford-forgiveness-project/

https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/nursing-excellence/ethics/code-of-ethics-for-nurses/

Resources for Teaching Nurses Civil Behaviors

https://www.ic4n.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Clark-Workplace-Civility-Index-Revised-Likert.pdf

https://www.jointcommission.org/assets/1/6/SEA_57_infographic_11_tenets_safety_culture.pdf

https://www.reflectionsonnursingleadership.org/features/more-features/Vol39_1_cindy-s-five-rites-for-fostering-student-driven-civility

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Bradberry, T. (2017). Ten Toxic People You Should Avoid Like the Plague. Retrieved from
        http://www.talentsmart.com

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Clark, C. (2017). An evidence-based approach to integrate civility, professionalism, and ethical
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