

It's time ... to respect your coworkers

Jason (31) and Kay (27)

I have been a part of this special division for nearly four years. Our team functions well together as we tackle some of the most technical problems in our field. At the end of the week, we go to the bar to wind down, talk, and have a good time before heading off for the weekend.

In the last few months, upper management made a decision to have more women brought in - something about gender equity. None of us were happy about this change, and we made that known to our superiors, but it didn't make a difference.

I was told that it was my job to make them feel comfortable about working on our team. Last month, the first three women joined us, and we welcomed them as we were told to do. As their supervisor, I made sure that they had their work assignments and were clear about their role in the office.

Last week, they asked to join us after work at the bar. One of the guys said it was OK, and they came along. The bar was loud and after a few drinks, we started making the usual comments about women's bodies. Nothing too bad and the women were laughing along with us. I didn't think much about it until Monday morning when one of the women, Kay, came to talk with me about how she could no longer work here.

Activity

Create a network map of WHO might be involved in this situation and WHAT they can do. Turn page over for answer key.

Answer Key

Directions

First, brainstorm the people who are in a position to say or do something. Some examples:

- Jason
- Kay
- The other two women
- The other men in the team
- Supervisors

Then, brainstorm what they might be able to do. Note:
Each person has a number of options.

Sample of suggested responses

For Jason

- Ask what happened and why she feels she needs to leave
- If she feels comfortable talking, explore any other options that she may not have thought about
- Take responsibility for the situation (and any personal responsibility) as appropriate and ask what other changes could be made
- Ask if she would feel more comfortable talking with someone in the administration or someone who might not be directly involved

For Kay

- Talk through what happened with a friend and what you want from this situation
- Document what happened through a journal or notes so that you are sure you remember everything correctly
- Explore as many options as possible before choosing what to do
- Consider talking directly with the people involved and if that is not safe, strategic, or what office policy suggests, talk with someone who could make the changes needed

For the other women and men on the team

- Depending upon what happened, contribute information as needed
- Ask for a review of the organization's policies if they do not adequately address the situation
- Request a clear policy to ensure that these situations do not occur in the future

For supervisors

- Find out the facts about what happened
- Depending upon what happened, explore what options are available to ensure that the organization continues to thrive and that the immediate and longer term issues are addressed
- Explore long-term policy implications and what changes might be needed to make the organization a better workplace for everyone involved
- Review the company's sexual harassment policy and training opportunities