

MISCONDUCT TO RESOLUTION: PLANNING TO PREVENT UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

DEFENSE COUNTERINTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY AGENCY

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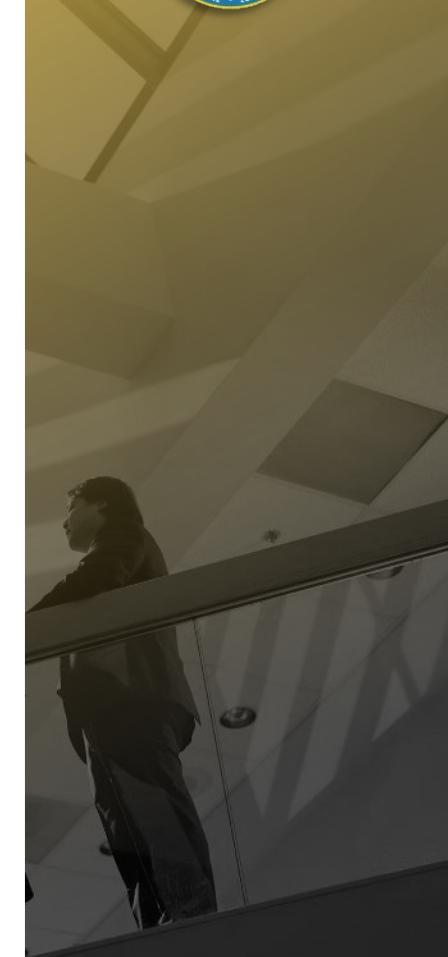
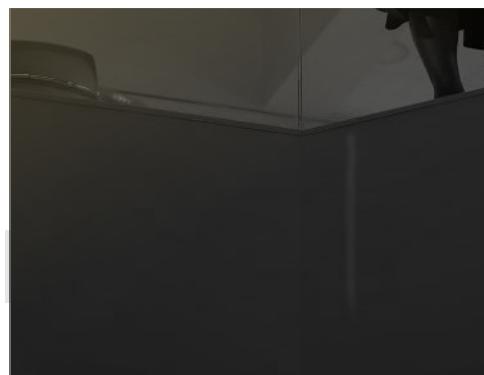
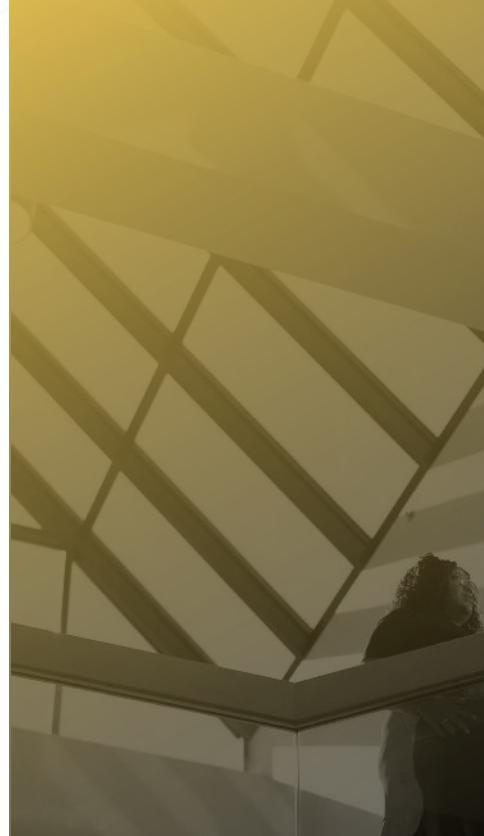




Disciplinary action

is a common organizational response to workplace misconduct and is often considered a first-line mitigation against misconduct that can also be characterized as an insider threat indicator.

Unfortunately, disciplinary actions can also have a detrimental effect on an individual's mindset whereby they induce new stressors, humiliation, or perceptions of unfair treatment.





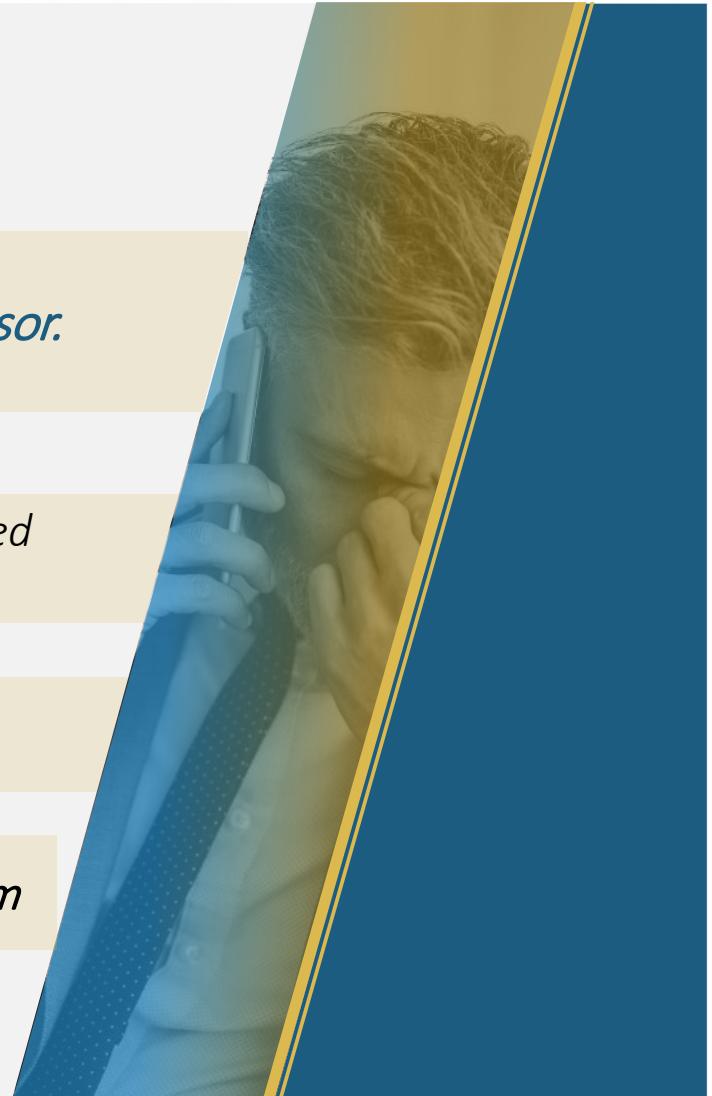
WHY THIS MATTERS TO INSIDER THREAT PROFESSIONALS



WHY IT MATTERS

Many insider threat cases escalate after a workplace stressor.

- 🚫 *Disciplinary actions can introduce emotional distress, perceived injustice, shame or humiliation, fear of job loss*
- 🚫 *These stressors can contribute to: retaliatory thinking, disengagement, loss of trust in leadership*
- ✅ *Our role is to ensure discipline does not become a catalyst for harm*





TYPES OF DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

	TYPES OF DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION
Initial Corrective Action	Verbal Counseling	Initial, formal steps aimed at clarifying expectations and correcting minor issues early on. Often documented by the supervisor.
Formal Warnings	Written Reprimands Letters of Concern Performance Improvement Plans (PIP)	Formal notices that become part of an employee's official personnel file.
Rehabilitative or Serious Interventions	Performance Improvement Plans (PIP) Suspensions (paid or unpaid) Demotion	PIPs are a structured attempt to improve performance with clear goals and timelines. Suspensions and demotions are punitive measures for continued or serious misconduct.
Final Measure	Termination	Typically occurs after all previous steps have failed or a single instance of gross misconduct.



Key Principle: Not All Misconduct is a Threat



MISCONDUCT

Misconduct does not automatically equate to Insider Threat Risk

Important Distinction:

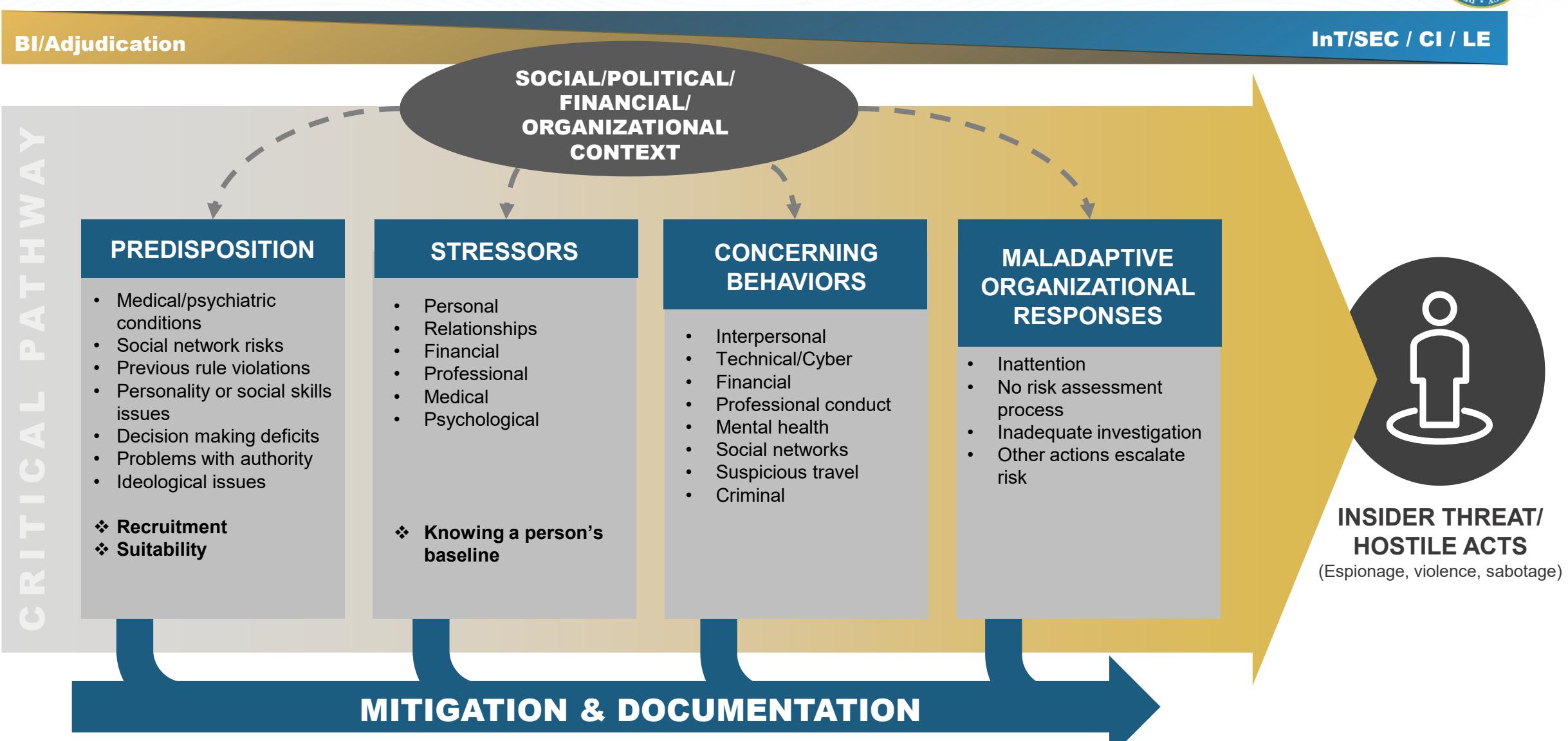
- Policy Violations
- Performance Issues
- Human Error
- Personal Stressors

Over-labeling employees as “threats” can:

- Damage trust
- Create fear-based cultures
- Reduce reporting and engagement



Misconduct, Discipline, and the Critical Pathway



*Lenzenweger, M. F., & Shaw, E. D. (2022). The Critical Pathway to Insider Risk Model: Brief Overview and Future Directions. *Counter-Insider Threat Research and Practice*, 1(1)



Are We Creating a Threat With Our Action?



REDUCE RISK

Before imposing discipline, ask:

- Could this action unintentionally escalate stress?
- Is the employee already experiencing personal or professional strain?
- Are we balancing accountability with dignity?

Discipline should reduce risk, not introduce new vulnerabilities.



Insider Threat mitigation is as much about prevention as enforcement.





The Supervisor's Role is Central

SUPERVISORS





Communication is the Intervention



COMMUNICATION



Firm and empathetic
Clear expectations
With compassion comes
accountability



Public Correction
Shaming language
Dismissive or punitive
tone





The Workforce is Watching

Disciplinary actions send messages beyond the individual involved.

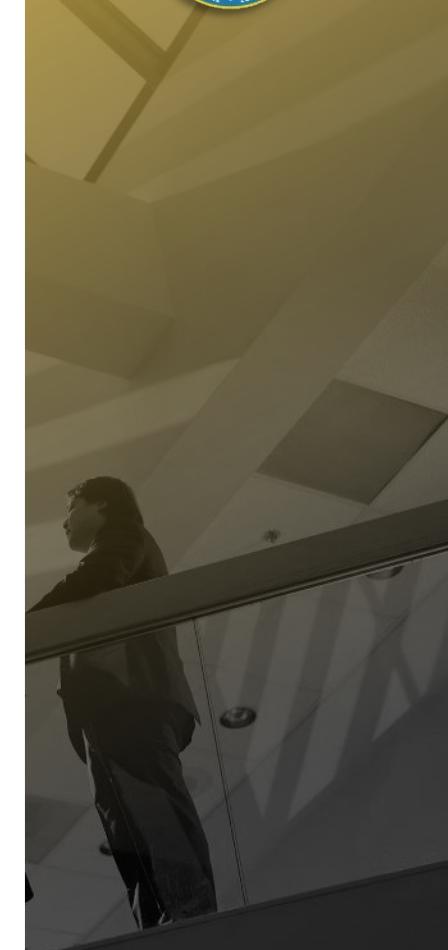
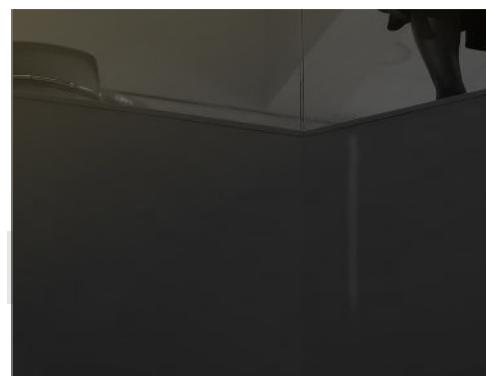
Employees observe:

- Fairness
- Consistency
- Respect

Thoughtful discipline reinforces organizational values

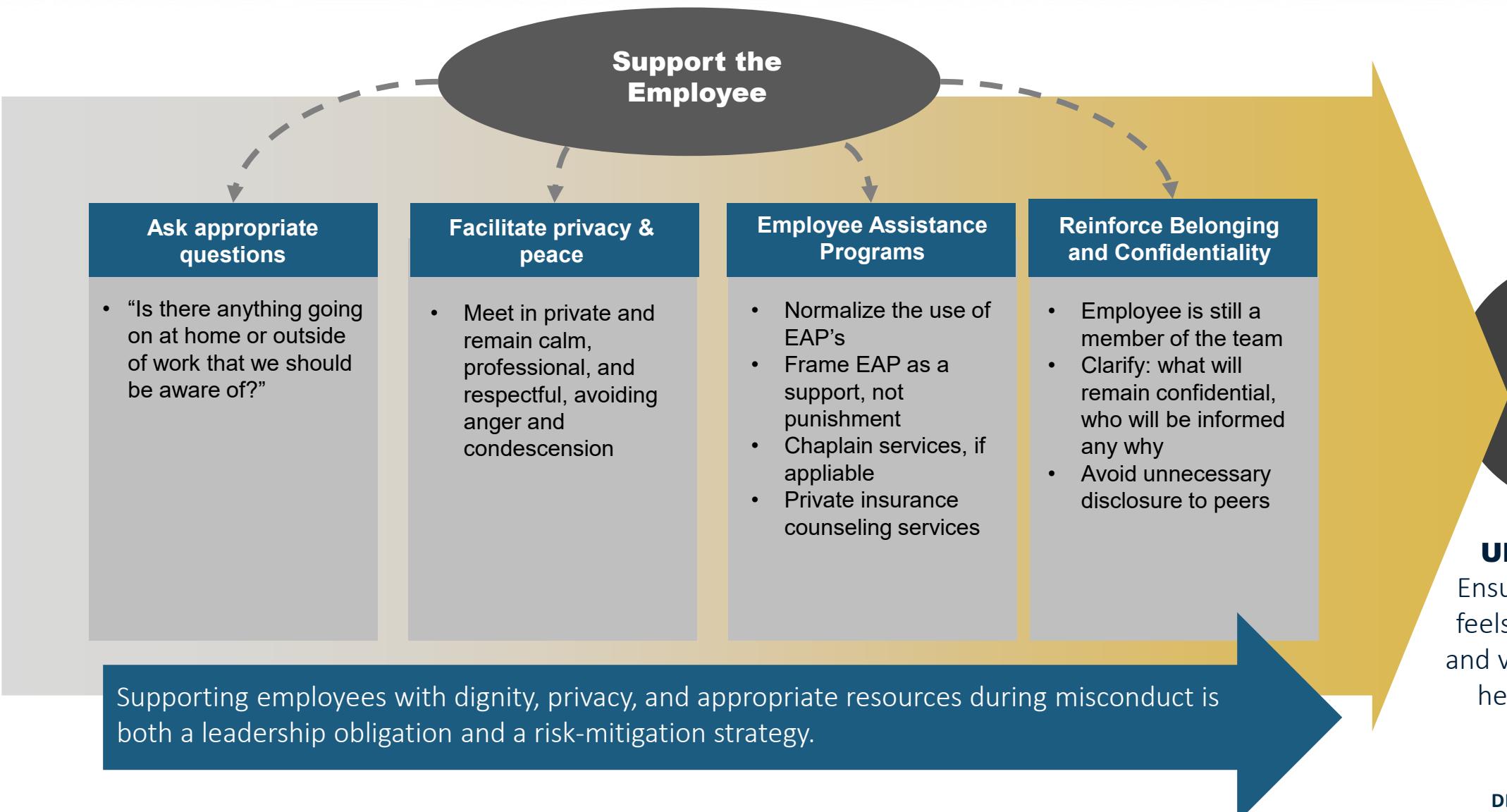
Poorly handled discipline can:

- Undermine morale
- Increase fear and silence
- Erode trust in leadership





Supporting the Employee – Reducing the Risk





Emotional Intelligence is Not Optional



EQ

Supervisors must develop EQ as part of risk management

➤ Emotional IQ supports:

- *de-escalation*;
- *trust-building*;
- *early identification of distress*

Leadership behavior can either stabilize or destabilize an employee.

EQ Resources:

Training: <https://www.federaltraining.com/leadership-development/emotional-intelligence-and-leadership.aspx>

Books: "Emotional Intelligence 2.0" by Drs. Jean Greaves and Travis Bradberry





CLOSING TAKEAWAYS

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DEFENSE
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BTAC Monthly Bulletins (and Beyond the Bulletin)



JUNE 2024

BULLETIN

MORAL OUTRAGE

FROM CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE TO INSIDER THREAT

INDICATORS OF MORAL OUTRAGE

- Expressing that they think it is inappropriate for their organization to do something
- Associating views or beliefs with white supremacy or fascism
- Requiring constant approval to do their job or have access to resources
- Refusing to work with others or being explosive in meetings
- Refusing to share or comment on work forums or social media
- Refusing to work with others or being explosive in meetings
- Refusing to work with others or being explosive in meetings
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CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE

A crisis of conscience is a state of mind where an individual feels compelled to act in a way that goes against their moral values and their personal values aligned with their professional role.

FOCUS ON FACTS

I can imagine how difficult it must be for your employee, can you tell me more about what they are going through today?

MORAL INJURY

The social psychological process of dissonance that occurs when an individual perceives that they have violated their own or another's moral values.

ADAPT

Organizational leaders need to ensure that their programs are DoD and implementation is used to ensure that the organization is able to achieve the mission or to assist in meeting all relevant requirements.

DITMAC

NOVEMBER 2023

BULLETIN

SPECIAL ISSUE

CONFlict & POLITICS IN THE WORKPLACE

Leadership is not easy, it is the practice of imperfect humans leading imperfect humans.

ORGANIZATIONAL DIFFICULTY

Leaders play a critical role in managing conflict, but leaders themselves may also experience difficulty through diversity, adding uncomfortable, and unrelated issues. A difficult leader, politics, and performance feedback, behavioral norms, and

DECEMBER 2024

BULLETIN

LEADERSHIP & INSIDER RISK SERIES

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Leaders have a direct impact on an organization's culture, health, and well-being. A vital component of effective leadership is a leader's ability to proactively address difficult topics and discussions in the workplace. While multiple viable approaches exist for approaching difficult discussions, leaders at all levels can set favorable conditions for more effective communication by regularly engaging with employees. One common practice is for leaders to make time to walk the floor and hold short, unstructured, ad-hoc discussions with employees; this approach helps to establish trust and set employees at ease with leadership. Ultimately, leaders who have established relationships with personnel are better able to proactively convey priorities and prepare for difficult conversations, using the skills below, when those situations arise.

KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS...

Prepare with a clear structure. Techniques like message mapping can help clarify the purpose, organize key points, and anticipate questions, ensuring the conversation remains focused and productive. Balance empathy with acknowledgment and keep in mind if it's difficult for you; it's probably difficult for the employee as well.

Focus on transparency of processes and acknowledging what you don't know.

Ask clarifying questions.

Avoid extreme words like "always" or "never".

Understand this has happened a few times. Do you have a sense of how often or when?

Remind them they are not alone. Provide resources and support.

Focus on facts and concrete examples when emotions are high.

Clarify your purpose. What are you wanting to convey?

Clearly the interests of affected parties (i.e., stakeholders).

List the questions or concerns your stakeholder might have about what you are communicating.

Organize and identify common themes from the list of questions or concerns you presented in the previous step.

Prepare in advance. Preparation can help one consider potential outcomes of the message.

Provide time and identify a maximum of three key questions or concerns the main theme.

Outline no more than three supporting details that target the message that address the theme.

PRIMARY STEPS FOR HIGH CONCERN MESSAGE MAPPING...

Message mapping can help zero in on the key factors and ensure the message is clear, concise, and easy to understand.

- Clarify your purpose. What are you wanting to convey?
- Clearly the interests of affected parties (i.e., stakeholders).
- List the questions or concerns your stakeholder might have about what you are communicating.
- Organize and identify common themes from the list of questions or concerns you presented in the previous step.
- Provide time and identify a maximum of three key questions or concerns the main theme.
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26%

45%

45% of employees say they do not have sufficient skills to have difficult conversations⁴

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Request BTAC Bulletin:
<https://forms.osi.apps.mil/r/guA68uW6v1>

BEHAVIORAL THREAT ANALYSIS CENTER

BEYOND THE BULLETIN

dvids

45%

Only 26% of employees believe that their employer adequately handles office conflicts and workplace disputes³

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