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## **Do's and Don'ts for Responding When Your Behavior is Perceived as Offensive**

by Tom Sebok

### **DO . . .**

1. Listen as non-defensively as you can.
2. Assuming it's true, assure the person that you did not intend for them to feel harassed, uncomfortable, or offended.
3. Tell the person you are sorry for how they feel the way they do as a result of your behavior.
4. Assure the person that you want them to feel comfortable in your presence and ask what you could do differently in the future so they will not feel that way.
5. Assuming the person's request would not prevent you from doing your job, agree to do what they ask to avoid the problem in the future.
6. Acknowledge that it may have been difficult for the person to approach you, given how they felt, and thank them for telling you directly about their concerns.
7. Ask them to please let you know in the future if they ever feel uncomfortable again.
8. Let them know they can speak with your supervisor if they would like to (and who your supervisor is – unless you know they know) about their concerns.

### **DON'T . . .**

1. Say they "are being too sensitive,"
2. Say they "have no sense of humor,"
3. Say they "are a prude,"
4. Say they "are flattering themselves" (if they believe you made unwelcome advances toward them),
5. Say they "are wrong,"
6. Say they "have mental/emotional problems,"
7. Threaten them,
8. Retaliate against them for complaining, or
9. Engage any further in the specific behaviors about which they are complaining!