



ABBIE'S STORY

Abbie just started a new job at a local accounting firm. This was the start of her new career and she was so excited. She was a hard worker and knew that she would do well in the company. Abbie loved her new boss from the time of the interview and thought that they would work well together. He was friendly and professional... or so she thought.

A few weeks into training for her position, Abbie's boss began making lewd and sexually charged comments to her. He often "accidentally" touched her. Then one day, as a joke, he offered Abbie a promotion in exchange for sexual favors. Abbie was so uncomfortable but many other employees told Abbie that that's just how things are at their company. She tried to forget about it but it made her dread going to work every day and made it difficult for her to focus on her job.

Finally, Abbie could not take it anymore. She worked up the courage to report what was going on to her human resources department. The person who had been harassing her was fired after an investigation into the matter. She felt much better knowing that such behavior was not tolerated and that she could do her job well now.

WHERE TO FIND HELP?

If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual harassment, there is help out there for you. Please, remember it is never your fault and you can get past it. You can contact:

- Your local Human Resources Department
- Your local union representative
- Emergency Assistance: 911

TEST YOURSELF!

Test your knowledge about sexual harassment by answering the following questions:

- Sexual harassment is really just people being flirtatious.
 - True
 - False
- Sexual harassment is a crime and is punishable by law.
 - True
 - False
- Sexual harassment has no adverse effects and is therefore no big deal.
 - True
 - False
- Sexual harassment can lead to a sexual assault.
 - True
 - False
- If you report an act of sexual harassment, you will be fired or demoted.
 - True
 - False

Answers: 1. b; 2. a; 3. b; 4. a; 5. b

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT



CROSSING THE LINE

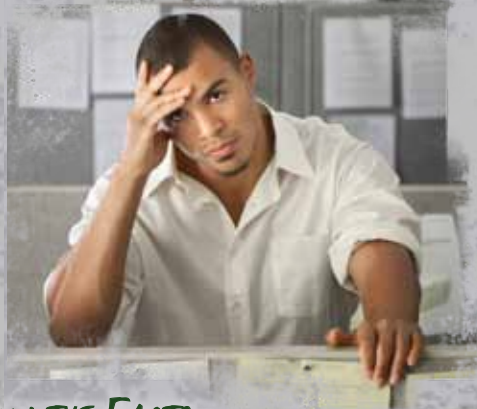
WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual advances, including lewd comments or gestures, requests for sexual favors, or unwanted touching or groping. In the workplace, it creates a hostile environment which makes many employees uncomfortable resulting in unproductivity and eventually leads many employees to quit.

Many people feel that there is no harm in being flirtatious.

However, sexual harassment is much more than flirtation. If it is unwanted by either party, then it is not okay and is sexual harassment. It is much better to leave any sexually charged comments or behaviors outside of the workplace.

Often new employees feel the highest level of pressure from sexual harassment. Because many new employees are being harassed by their supervisors, they feel they cannot speak up for fear of being fired and that the harassment will eventually stop. However, many times when sexual harassment goes unreported, it leads to sexual assault.



KNOW THE FACTS

The facts about sexual harassment are astounding. One in three women in the workplace have experienced sexual harassment and one in ten men in the workplace have experienced sexual harassment in some form. Many employees feel that this is just a part of the workplace environment and that they should just try to ignore it, but this is not the truth.

Plain and simple, sexual harassment is against the law. There have been many recent Supreme Court cases involving opposite sex and same sex harassment. In each case the Supreme Court ruled that sexual harassment is not acceptable and is punishable by law. In the workforce, you can be demoted or even fired for partaking in such behavior. It is not flirtation and it is no laughing matter.

What are the warning signs that someone has been the victim of sexual harassment?

- The victim is easily startled or distressed around another employee or supervisor.
- There is a constant sense of discomfort or fear which causes the victim to be unable to focus on their job.
- The victim withdraws from other employees and tries to keep to themselves.
- The victim cannot make eye contact and fears speaking too much in case something might come out and they might be fired for it.

Long term effects of Sexual Harassment

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Extreme unproductivity in the workplace
- Increase in a harassed employee taking time off or sick leave to avoid perpetrator
- Can eventually lead to sexual assault of the victim

YOU'RE BEING SEXUALLY HARASSED WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

If you are being sexually harassed it is not your fault. There is nothing that you said or did to attract such unwanted, offensive behavior. It is not okay for someone to treat you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable. Take these steps to put a stop to it now.

1. Confront the perpetrator.
 - Be clear and firm when you tell them to stop.
 - Make sure your body language matches your words. Have firm posture and make eye contact.
 - Explain to them why what they are doing is not okay and makes you feel uncomfortable and that such behavior is a crime and is punishable by law.
 - Let them know that such behavior will be immediately reported to the proper channels if said behavior persists.
2. If the behavior persists or you fear for your safety then report the behavior immediately.
 - Many companies have channels in place to handle sexual harassment. You can find out about these channels by contacting your Human Resources Department.
 - If your supervisor is not involved in the harassment then let them know what is going on and that you no longer feel comfortable working with the perpetrator.
 - If you are part of a union then you can report the sexual harassment to your union leader directly.
3. If you feel threatened with retaliation in any way, contact the local authorities as well and let your place of employment know that you have contacted the authorities because you feel unsafe. Never put yourself in a position of danger.

THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE!

Myths and misconceptions

There are so many misconceptions and myths involving sexual harassment. Here are a few:

Myth: People need to lighten up; sexual harassment is really just flirting, and people should not be so uptight about it.

Truth: Sexual harassment and flirtation are two very different things. Flirtation makes you feel good and is mutually reciprocated. Sexual harassment makes you feel uncomfortable and is unwanted. There is a fine line between the two sometimes. It is always better to be conservative with flirtation in the workplace.

Myth: If I ignore sexual harassment, then it will go away.

Truth: Sexual harassment often escalates in to sexual assault when left unchecked. If someone thinks that they can get away with it, they will keep pushing the matter.

Myth: If it's not happening to me, then I should just look the other way. After all, it is not my problem.

Truth: In many instances, perpetrators who get away with harassing one victim often move on to other victims. It is not just about sexual attraction but also power. The more people the perpetrator can get away with harassing the more powerful they are.

