

Ensuring Workers' Psychological Safety Is the Key to Preventing Workplace Violence

written by vickyp | April 1, 2021



Workplace shootings like the one that happened at the Indianapolis FedEx Ground facility yesterday were far less frequent last year, even in the U.S. But that's probably only because there were much fewer people at work. And now that employees are returning to the workplace, I highly doubt the lull will continue. Even so, killing sprees are relatively rare. Most acts of [workplace violence](#) are in the form of conduct that's serious enough to do physical or mental damage but not serious enough to draw media attention. Such behaviours range from physical but non-deadly violence to non-physical behaviours like harassment, [bullying](#), threats, emotional abuse, intimidation and stalking. And they can happen at literally any workplace every single day.

Accordingly, while employers should be prepared to deal with [active shooter events](#) (especially in high risk industries like healthcare and retail), the key to preventing workplace violence is to focus on the entire continuum of less serious forms that, left unchecked, can increase [mental stress](#) and lead to tragedies like the FedEx shooting. Making your workplace psychologically safe, in other words, is the most effective thing you can do to protect your workers and keep your workplace out of the headlines.

Achieving [psychological safety](#) takes both a strong [policy statement](#) laying out your organization's commitment to protect employees against [workplace harassment and violence and a program](#) consisting of [measures](#) to prevent it, including [hazard assessment](#), [training](#) and [awareness](#), [reporting](#), [investigating](#) and disciplinary accountability. Check out the HRI website to find the tools you need to implement an effective prevention program at your own workplace.

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