

How to Manage Election Stress in the Workplace

The days leading up to an election, and the days after, may pose unique challenges in the workplace. Politics have been impacting work life more prominently in recent years and can make it difficult to maintain team cohesion amongst political differences.

While not easy, these tips are designed to help your teams navigate the challenges that accompany election stress.

78%

of people talk about politics at work. ¹

47%

say elections impact their ability to get work done. ²

31%

say talking about politics at work is stressful or frustrating. ³

Before starting work, decide what you think is okay to discuss and what topics you will avoid. As Roger Brooks from Facing History And Ourselves points out, for those working remotely, we have to seek out dialogue with co-workers and in doing so, can be thoughtful about what we discuss and what we don't.

Establish boundaries between your work and personal life, especially during these politically charged times. With remote and hybrid work, it's easy for the lines to blur and it is vital to think about the language, views and disclosures that are appropriate for your personal interactions, but not for workplace discussions.

Recognize how your own views are impacting your behaviors. Take responsibility for your actions and words. Identifying how you may be contributing to a tense or uncomfortable environment can help decrease conflicts at work. And remember that you don't always know the political views of your co-workers, so it's important not to make assumptions.

Be respectful during interactions at work. A recent survey from the Society for Human Resource Management found that 42% of U.S. employees say they have personally experienced political disagreements at work.

Respect no longer means just treating people as you want to be treated, it means treating others as THEY WANT to be treated. Respect includes listening to what your co-worker is saying. If you begin to feel disconnected and that your emotions are clouding your ability to listen, it may be time to politely bow out of the conversation. Respectfully agreeing to disagree can go a long way.

Strive to be inclusive as a leader or coworker – engagement of all team members can enhance cohesion and productivity. Some people have differing levels of comfort talking about private matters, and political views, at work. Notice who is and isn't participating in conversations, and it could imply that the topic isn't one that everyone wants to discuss.

As Gartner found in their poll of 500 employees, 36% of employees said they have avoided talking to, or working with, a coworker because of their political views, and this likely impacts collaboration among teams.

Focus on your work. When all else fails in juggling your political views with job responsibilities, remember where you are and what tasks are in front of you. During times of stress and preoccupation, focusing on a single work-related task at a time can help improve productivity and provide a sense of accomplishment.

If it's hard to re-focus on work, take a few minutes to talk with your manager or co-worker... not about politics, but about a work-related topic to help shift your focus.

Sources: 1, 2, 3: Gartner Survey

