

It's Not My Problem!-Thoughts on Social Responsibility Part 1.

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As all of us are aware by now, there has been some pretty harsh criticism directed toward the lack of response and perceived apathy toward a recent hit and run in our capital city. The chief of police stated that we had "Lost our moral compass". Most of us would like to believe that given the circumstances, we would respond more appropriately than did the apparent witnesses to that crime. Most unfortunately, research points otherwise.

The television show 20/20 recently did a short series entitled "What would you do?" They had actors portray a number of situations in which bystanders witnessed a variety of situations involving domestic violence to shoplifting, and the results of people acting altruistically were appalling!

The reasons and excuses that people use for not becoming involved are staggering, but some of the most common include:

"It's not my problem".

"I don't want to get involved".

"If I say something, there will be repercussions".

"It's just the way it is. You can't change it".

"Nobody else is doing anything about it".

"It's no big deal, everybody does it".

Whether it is fear, apathy, callousness, indifference or any number of factors, one thing is clear- not everyone takes responsibility to do the right thing. This month, I will pose a series of questions with a couple of observations on human behavior. My belief is that most of us do want to make a positive difference. As we become more dependent on electronically communication and impersonal ways of interacting, it may be more important than ever to remind ourselves that our actions do make a difference.

We don't need nationally sensational headlines to think about what we would do when we witness an obvious wrongdoing. From time to time, the EAP receives calls, or we meet with employees who are very troubled by what they perceive to be "unethical and fraudulent " workplace practices. They often ask our advice on what course of action would be best. This isn't a question we can always easily answer.

It's a matter of right verses wrong; good verses bad, personal values etc. Every situation and individual has unique circumstances, but sometimes, the answers are black and white. Often we are indignant or self-righteous about our coworker's behavior. Is our own any different?

This week's question: You overhear someone on the phone saying that they couldn't get the day off next week because they have no vacation time left, so they'll just call in sick. "What would you do?"

Next week, some ways to handle that, and new questions to ponder.

If you have any questions on workplace related ethics that you would like answered, please E mail us, and we will respond either personally, or in this column.

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