

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1694 Workplace Conflict and the 24-Hour Rule

Is there any conflict going on in where you work? It doesn't always have to mean an all-out battle, but are there people getting "into it" now and then? It's a normal thing. You don't want too much of it, but a little bit of conflict is okay if you handle it correctly. By "correctly," it might mean taking an intentional break from it as a strategy. I'm Jerry Roberts, and I'll explain what it's all about, next on the Extra Point.

In the workplace, moments of heightened emotion can lead to frustration, anger, or hurt feelings, often resulting in hasty words or impulsive decisions that may later be regretted. You've seen it, I've seen it.

In order to keep a lid of these situations getting out of hand and to make the best decisions possible, many experts suggest that we adopt a "24-hour rule".

The 24-Hour Rule encourages individuals to take a full day to process their emotions before responding to triggering events or conversations.

Before I go further, there are circumstances when waiting 24 hours doesn't work. You have to take immediate action, such as situations like emergencies or safety concerns. With that out of the way, let's focus on those times when you can pause, reflect, and take a breath before making a decision.

The purpose of the 24-Hour Rule is for workers to take a step back, think things over, then approach conflicts with a clearer mindset, effectively hitting a "reset button" on the situation.

This goes against normal workplace conflict, where two or more people have differences and can't resolve them. The first thing people want to do is win, not to take a time out for a day. Win now...that's the answer for them. So why even think of this 24-hour break.

1. It cools off emotions from taking over. When

we're upset or defending a position, our emotions are firing. You've heard me say it many times: Either we control our emotions or our emotions will control us. When we're in conflict, we are likely to be reactive, especially if our opponent knows how to "push our buttons."

When it happens we can lose focus, conflict can worsen. Taking 24 hours to cool off and think can turn us from reactive to proactive.

2. Losing emotional control can lead to making impulsive decisions. Reacting impulsively can escalate conflicts instead of resolving them. Taking a day to think clearly and gain a sound perspective, we can walk through potential responses, imagining the outcome of each.

3. Taking a short break can help build trust and respect. One of the problems with conflict at work is that it can do serious damage to relationships. Trust and respect can be easily lost. When that happens, it can take a long time to be re-established.

We spoke about having regrets on Friday. I've seen people say and do thing things during conflict with someone, that they definitely regretted later.

Words fly out of your mouth and you can't get them back. You see the other person react to those words, and you know the relationship just changed. Maybe you didn't mean it to come out the way it did. Maybe a 24-hour cooling off period would have helped.

How we adopt this idea is to bring it up in a meeting and toss it out for comment. Talk about the benefits of such a system, and then see if anybody has a contrary opinion.

You can suggest taking the 24-Hour Rule for a test drive. The next time serious conflict or a major disagreement happens, call a 24-hour time out and agree to come together again when it's over. (Con't.)

You just might find that both sides have cooled off and are more open to what others have to say.

By the way, you can use this same concept for when conflict breaks out at home.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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