

Costco Manager Training – Addressing Employees in Crisis

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Hi, welcome to the Costco Manager Training addressing employees in Crisis. My name is Brig Dunsmore. I'm a clinical mental health counselor licensed in the state of Utah, and I'm glad to be with you today.

Our focus today is going to be on when employees make threats of harm to themselves or others. We're going to talk about actions that you as a manager can take including how to deescalate a situation immediate steps to take, and the follow up and ongoing support that you can provide to your employee. We're going to review services available to help managers and employees in the moment.

Definitely this is our big question, what do you do? How do you react in the moments that a crisis or stressful situation occurs? When faced with an urgent situation you may feel very anxious and afraid, very tense. You might have difficulty making decisions or worry that you're going to make a mistake that can feel overwhelming. Perhaps you just aren't sure what steps you need to take. These are all normal thoughts and feelings for people when they are put in intense situations but they don't have to be yours.

Spending some time learning about the resources available, company protocols and healthy coping skills can help you manage your stress during an intense situation. That doesn't mean that the situation won't impact you and you may still need some support afterwards but it will help you be a better decision maker in the moment. Certainly, focusing on a few things right at the beginning can help you and your employee in that moment.

First, breathing, focusing on your breathing will help you react calmly in a stressful situation and often the person you're talking to will match your breathing. This will help them calm down, speak calmly. Your pace and intensity of speech will serve to escalate or deescalate a stressful situation. Steady speech at a normal volume will help others feel calm and often you can deescalate someone that is yelling by lowering the volume of your voice so that they have to listen to hear what you were saying and ask clarifying questions, as time allows.

Gather information, don't assume that you know what is happening or how others are feeling without asking, and reach out for support. Now, there are multiple layers here. If your

colleague is struggling and in a bad place talk to them about the resources that are available to help and work with them to access those resources. In an immediate crisis situation you may need to reach out to 911, 988 or some other crisis line to help keep people safe.

Dealing with crises and stress can definitely have an impact on you, so know where you can reach out to support you in coping with the feelings and stress that you experience. Let's review some scenarios and talk about how to deescalate the situation some immediate actions you can take and the follow up and the resources available to you and to your employees.

First is Bob. You've been asked to speak with Bob because his performance is slipped as of late. He's increasingly late for work and he seems to have trouble focusing. His personal hygiene seems to be getting worse in recent weeks and his clothes don't appear to have been washed recently. This is a change for Bob as he's previously been a solid employee that generally took care of his physical appearance and when you ask Bob how he's doing he gets kind of teary-eyed and he says, I'm not doing well. I just don't see the point of anything. I'm not sure that I want to be here anymore.

So take a moment and consider how would you respond to Bob? Here's some thoughts. First, again, take a deep breath. This will help you be calm, speak clearly and calmly to Bob that will help him be calm, express empathy and concern. You can say things like, Hey Bob, you know, I care about you. I'm concerned about your wellbeing. I've seen that you're struggling a little bit and I just wanted to ask and to help.

You can ask questions. Bob, you seem a bit down. I'm worried about you. How are you doing? Bob your performance has changed and you aren't taking care of yourself the way that you normally do. Things have changed. You seem to be struggling. What's going on? You can ask him, Bob what do you mean I'm not sure I want to be here anymore?

Then depending on his answer, you may want to follow up with him in a very direct way and ask Bob if he's thinking of ending his life. Now, that can be a tough question and often people think that asking that may plant the idea in someone's head, but research shows that people who are suicidal will often answer the question honestly and appreciate that someone is willing to ask. It shows that you care.

You can be very, very direct in saying, Bob are you having thoughts of ending your life? Are you having thoughts of killing yourself? If Bob is having suicidal thoughts, then you want follow up and ask if he has a plan and ask how he intends to act on that plan. If he has a plan and the means to act on it then you need to get help right away and ensure that someone

stays with Bob until he can get help.

Okay, so example if Bob says Yes I'm thinking about killing myself. I recently bought a gun and I plan to do that tonight after work then somebody needs to stay with Bob. We need to make sure that he is getting somewhere immediately so that he can be taken care of. So what are some immediate actions it can take?

Obviously the way that you act towards Bob and the resources you choose will depend a lot on the answers that he gave in the previous questions. 988 will work with Bob to assess his level of dangerousness and work with him to connect with local mental health counselors. They can also make recommendations if Bob is in immediate danger, they can make recommendations for him to go to an emergency department or somewhere else to get immediate care.

Resources for Living can also speak with Bob and I should add, it is okay if you were on the phone with Bob, he may need that level of support in that moment and that's okay. You know, put them on speaker phone and you can talk to them together. Resources for Living can help Bob get connected to a mental health therapist for counseling sessions and they can also provide Bob with other resources to help him address his current mental health issues.

One nice thing about resources for a living is when they refer counselors to Bob they will be using his health benefits to ensure that those therapists are part of his network. 911 is something that may need to be called if Bob is an immediate threat to himself and he refuses to have someone else take him to the emergency room, 911 may be the best option and they can transport him to the nearest hospital.

Now, I know that a lot of us have heard certain things that didn't go well when 911 was called in a mental health emergency. However, the majority of the time the police handle these things well and they're taken care of and handled well. We hear about those few and they're a big deal but I want to reassure you that this is an appropriate number to call if Bob is in immediate danger and they generally do a very good job with that. One of the keys here is ensuring that Bob isn't left alone until he can get professional help.

You can see if he'll give permission for a friend or family member to be contacted to pick him up and if they can transport him to the hospital or to see someone. If in our example we talked about Bob having a gun and wanting to use it to his life and so perhaps there's a discussion that needs to happen there about can the family member ensure that that gun is no longer in the home or in Bob's possession while he is struggling and unstable, follow up

on ongoing support.

If you and or Bob have reached out to Resources for Living and Bob is feeling suicidal RFL will talk to him about options. They'll assess his level of dangerousness make some recommendations, and they will follow up with Bob within 24 hours. They will also make sure that Bob has someone to see can help him schedule individual counseling sessions to address his depression, suicidality and any other mental health issues that he may be experiencing so that Bob can have ongoing follow up.

988 can do that immediate assessment. They can provide a list of therapists in the area some also some community resources and supports. They, however, will not follow up with Bob after that call. myStrength can be a digital resource that supports Bob as he works through depression, coping skills, learning resiliency, or addressing other mental health concerns. And as a manager, you should make it a point to check in regularly with Bob to see how he's doing. Now you aren't his therapist, but you want to show Bob that you care and that you're concerned about his wellbeing.

Let's move on to our next scenario. Marcella and Dave, Marcella comes to you at the start of the shift and says that her friend and coworker Dave has been really upset with several other coworkers. They've been having some ongoing conflict recently and Marcella says that Dave thinks they're out to get him.

Marcella reports that Dave told her to stay home from work next Wednesday because he's going to light the place up. Marcelo reports that Dave recently bought a gun. How would you handle that situation? First? Again, breathing, take a deep breath and remain calm. Breathing will be important for you to think clearly and it will definitely help Marcella to stay calm as well.

Let Marcella know how much you appreciate her courage in reporting her concerns. That's a big deal. You know, there's a lot of reasons why that could be very, very hard and it's great that she came forward and while there isn't a one size fits all approach to various threats that can occur in this situation you would want to take a statement from Marcella and just gather details about what specific things Dave said to her.

Some immediate action. So assuming that there isn't an immediate threat this would be the process that you would follow. Okay? You'd reach out to human resources and follow their directions. Odds are good that they would ask you to arrange an interview with Dave to give him the opportunity to respond to the concerns that Marcella has raised.

Human resources will likely advise that Dave is to be placed on administrative leave pending the conclusion of their investigation into his comments and depending on their discussion human resources may advise contacting law enforcement reach out to resources for living for a management consultation. Ultimately, the management team should do what they feel is most appropriate at the moment to ensure that everyone's safe and that definitely has to be the primary concern.

Resources for Living can be a helpful tool for both Dave and Marcella. If Dave is struggling with coping skills, stress depression, or other mental health concerns, RFL can work with him to connect him with a therapist for counseling sessions and if Marcella is having a difficult time she can also be referred to RFL to help support her. Again, myStrength can be a useful online resource to help both address anxiety, stress and anger management and continue to follow up with Dave about how he's feeling and doing.

Find out if things are going better with his peers and check in with Marcella to make sure that she's doing okay. Remember to take care of you. It's not just your team members that are impacted by stressful events. So are you. And handling intense crisis situations can take a lot out of you. It's important that you do what you can to keep yourself in a healthy place. So here's some thoughts. Your ability to keep yourself healthy is a key part of being resilient and managing stress.

So be intentional about sleep about what you eat and about making sure that you get regular exercise, when you're at work. Take your breaks, go outside and get some air and some sun. Set some boundaries. You know, don't take on more than you're capable of handling. You know, if your plate is full don't volunteer for more. If you're feeling overwhelmed, speak to your supervisor about your duties and responsibilities and see if there are ways to prioritize what's most important while maybe letting a few other things wait.

Establishing good connections with others is huge. It strengthens your physical and emotional health and it can strengthen your brain and your immune system. Remember to do things that you love. This keeps passion in your life and it helps you advance towards your goals. It also gives you a chance to develop other skills and talents. Make sure that you take your personal time off, your vacation time.

You'll be more productive when you allow yourself to step away from the job periodically. And if you're struggling, know that you don't have to do it alone. Use your resources for living benefits and your employee benefits to get help. Think about it. You'd encourage your own employees to do it so follow your own advice.

Let's review some of the resources available to managers and employees just so you know what's out there and what you have access to. Managers can access resources to help with things like conflict and problem solving with people and situations preventing and handling insubordination at work. You have access to critical instance stress management services that can be short-term support following a traumatic event. It's available 24/7 for all shifts.

It can involve group and individual counseling and it can involve debrief and support for human resources and managers. So sometimes when you may want to consider that are times like after a natural disaster when there's a traumatic death on or offsite for short term immediate grief support if there's a robbery or attempted robbery, if there's a workplace fatality or if there's a serious injury or accident if there's an active workplace violence or a threat if there's a reduction in force if you've witnessed a traumatic event if there's a facility fire, if there's a bomb threat these are all times when you can reach out to resources for living.

For critical instance, stress management services there's workshops for leadership. These are trainings that can be scheduled on topics like stress management, mental health awareness in the workplace, and conflict resolution. It can involve things like resilience, you know adopting a healthy lifestyle maintaining work and home balance, mental health awareness in the workplace, as I mentioned, and many other things.

They can also provide awareness training for things like sexual harassment, diversity drug and alcohol awareness, and even more. Resources for Living is the starting point for mental health care and resources for everyday life. It's a confidential service that is designed to support Costco employees, whether they're dealing with a big life issue or lots of small challenges even if they just don't know where to start. And I think what's showing here on this slide really kind of explains some of the things that are there and available to you.

Resources For Living is available to all Costco employees their dependents up to age 26 and all of their household members. Any eligible person can call resources for living and connect with a care partner who will help you assess the resources that you need and the supports that you may need. So hopefully those things are useful.

Thank you for spending a few minutes today talking about what to do when there are employees who make threats of harm to themselves or others. Hopefully you've gotten some additional ideas about how to deescalate the situation immediate actions to take and how to follow up and provide ongoing support.

Hopefully you've learned something about the resources available to you and your employees and how they can help reduce stress and address mental health needs. Remember, Resources For Living is here to support you. Thanks again for your time and have a great day.

Resources For Living

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