



Avoiding Cliques: A Guide for Managers

Cliques are a common aspect of interpersonal relationships at work. Small sub-groups may form for a variety of reasons, such as similar positions, common interests, or closeness in age or background. A clique may become problematic when:

- A small group has gained an oversized amount of sway within the larger team
- Other team members are being isolated or ostracized

If you are concerned that a clique is undermining team dynamics, these steps may help:

1. **Consult with Human Resources.** HR can help you review relevant policies and provide suggestions for how to address your concerns. LifeMatters can also offer consultation and guidance.
2. **Schedule separate, private meetings with each member of the clique.** Outline your concerns and explain what behaviors are considered inappropriate. If there are allegations of bullying or harassment, follow company policy.

Sample language: “It is important that everyone feel welcome and respected within our team.”

3. **Listen.** Ask each person to provide their observations on what is happening.

Sample language: “Please share your perspective on these events.”

4. **Outline your expectations.** Clearly explain what changes you would like to see. If there are issues with workflow, or if some members of the group are not following procedure, outline expectations.

Sample language: “I understand that personal friendships sometimes spill over into the workplace. However, they can’t get in the way of team goals. Here is what I expect in the future.”

5. **Make a personal or performance referral to LifeMatters.** A LifeMatters Consultation Specialist can help you determine if a performance referral is warranted based on each individual’s behavior.

Sample language: “LifeMatters will work with you to improve your on-the-job performance, as well as assist with any personal concerns. Please give them a call.”

6. **Follow up.** Meet privately with each person at a later date. Note any improvements in work performance and behavior. Outline any changes that may still be needed.

Sample language: “Let’s meet again next week. In the meantime, I’m available to answer any questions you may have.”

The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can help you address any team or management-related issue. Call 24/7/365.

1-800-367-7474

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