

4 Steps to An Empathy-Based Workplace Violence Prevention Program

Many workplace violence prevention programs teach employees to recognize concerning behaviors and respond through a mindset of deterrence: **“Is this person becoming dangerous?”** But that’s not prevention. It’s consequence avoidance.

Prevention moves upstream when we change the lens. When we shift to a mindset of empathy, the question becomes: **“Is this person struggling?”**

An empathy mindset encourages curiosity, care, and shared responsibility. Conversations happen earlier, creating more opportunities to offer help and prevent escalation.

Step 1. Promote Awareness and Shared Responsibility

Help people notice change early and trust when something feels off.



Employees ask themselves:

Am I noticing a **CHANGE** in a person or situation?

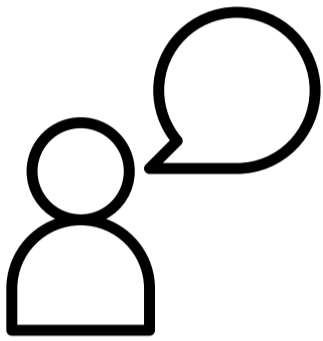
- They’re becoming more withdrawn, agitated, or fixated on grievances
- Interactions are becoming increasingly tense, strained, or difficult

Am I **UNSETTLED** by someone's behavior or situation?

- I’m struggling to dismiss or explain away what I’m seeing/hearing
- Something feels off... even though I can’t put my finger on it

Step 2. Make it Safe to Speak Up

Create the conditions where speaking up feels safe and worthwhile.



Employees say to themselves:

- When something feels concerning, I don’t carry it alone.
- Speaking up isn’t making accusations – it’s about care and prevention.

Employees consider ways to take action:

- Checking In - *“Hey... you don’t seem yourself lately. Everything okay?”*
- Saying What They’re Noticing - *“I may be off here, but it seems like something’s been weighing on you. Wanna talk?”*
- Talking to Someone Who Can Help - *A manager, trusted leader, HR, or Security*

Step 3. Use Behavioral Intelligence to Inform Action

Behavioral insight reveals barriers to prevention.



Even when people know the right thing to do, cultural barriers can lead to hesitation or silence. Behavioral intelligence uncovers blind spots and produces actionable insights.

Organizations learn if employees...

- feel supported when they bring concerns forward
- believe speaking up will actually make a difference
- trust their concerns will be handled with care and won’t make things worse

Step 4. Maintain a Culture of Engagement, Safety and Security

Connection strengthens safety, security, and prevention.



Nurture Belonging - Employees who feel connected to their work and team are more likely to speak up and less likely to disengage in harmful ways. *What’s something small that could make your team feel more connected?*

Reward Candor, Not Conformity - Psychological safety creates space for people to share ideas, raise concerns, and trust they’ll be heard. *Do you convey a commitment to listening, even when people bring up concerns or differing views?*

Offer Support Over Disconnection - The strongest workplaces are willing to have difficult conversations when needed. *Say “Let’s talk this through now so we can move forward with clarity,” sooner rather than later.*

Turning Training Into Behavioral Insight

Atana’s workplace violence prevention training goes beyond course completion. Embedded behavioral assessments help organizations understand how employees think, feel, and intend to act when concerns arise.

The result: data-driven insight into organizational strengths, cultural barriers, and opportunities to strengthen prevention.

What the Data Shows

GAPS

87% feel confident a concern would be handled professionally but only **67%** feel the process for sharing a concern within their organization is easy.

BARRIERS TO ACTION

40% believe there would be obstacles to getting safe should there be an act of extreme violence.

PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURE

90% feel supported by their managers in both prevention and response efforts; **88%** feel supported by co-workers in these areas.

Atana Trend Data (across all employees trained with Getting Real About Workplace Violence).

[Learn more about Atana’s Getting Real About Workplace Violence course and Atana Insights.](#)