

# premeditated conduct

**thought, consideration or planning of an action beforehand**



Imagine that you're holding a beautiful ceramic dining plate in your hands. For some reason, you throw it to the ground, shattering it to pieces. Suddenly, however, you regret throwing the plate, so you apologize to it, hoping that it will reassemble itself and go back to the way it was. However, the plate remains unbroken; even if you glue the pieces back together, it is irrevocably changed forever.

In a similar sense, our words and actions have the power to damage or "break" other people's feelings. In the workplace, verbal communication coupled with our actions are essential parts of healthy company culture. However, in some cases, and workplaces, that is easier said than done.

**Remember that your first thought is not always your best thought** It's easy to want to say the first thing that comes to mind, without thinking of how our intentions will come across to others, or without taking into consideration our tone. Taking even just three seconds to screen a word or phrase that might be offensive can do wonders. You might be amazed at how your mind will automatically organize your thoughts and give you options to getting your point across in a considerate manner. Pausing also lets others know that you are taking the time to think through what you are saying.

**Consider saying nothing at all** You don't have to have an opinion on every topic and situation. In cases where you aren't exactly sure what words will communicate your point, consider saying nothing. You can hang back and observe until you develop a better idea of what you need to say and how to *best* say it. In these cases, you may even discover that someone else has effectively communicated what you wanted to say and that voicing your opinion would only be redundant.

**Never forget where you are** Most of us are aware that our home and work lives come with their own distinct set of rules on what language or topics are okay. Before you speak, remember where you are; your co-workers and colleagues may be like family to you, but using potentially offensive language around them is a mistake.

**Apologize for your missteps** Sometimes, despite our best intentions, we may inadvertently offend someone. When that happens, apologize quickly, concisely, and honestly. If you said something that you knew you should not have said, own up to it with no excuses. You may not be able to repair the damage immediately, but you will avoid causing further offense by acknowledging your mistake.

Our language, words and actions literally shape our lives in ways we are only beginning to understand. We are each responsible for the words that we use with others, and when we fail to think before we speak, we run the risk of showing the worst parts of ourselves and needlessly offending others.