



CIRCLE OF RESPONSIBILITY

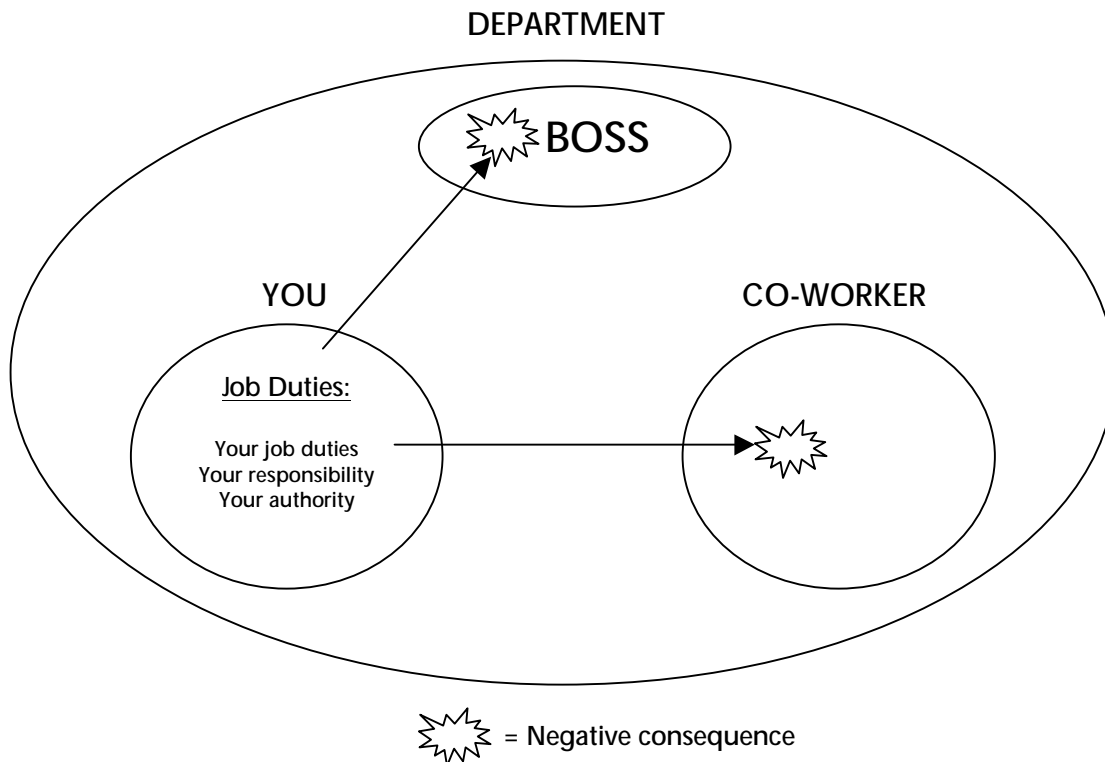
Every company, every workplace, every relationship system has circles of responsibility. As a matter of fact, each one of us as an employee has a personal circle of responsibility, which contains certain specific functions regarding control.

- Responsibilities: job duties and performance standards
- Authority: the power and right in our job role to carry out work duties
- Protection: a guard against negative consequences

The important question we confront on a day-to-day basis is:

"What should I control and what should I not control?"

Many times when conflict and/or communication problems occur in the workplace it is due to stepping outside of one's Circle of Responsibility. We then have no protection, no authority, and no responsibility outside what has been given to us. We are then vulnerable to negative consequences.



Aurora Employee Assistance Program



Case in Point:

A supervisor referred an employee to the EAP due to complaints from her co-workers about the employee's anger and attitude in the department. This employee had been at her job for 15 yrs and was a very capable and competent worker with a good work history. She actually was an exceptionally hard worker with a very strong work ethic and concern for her customers.

The employee's problems in the workplace were described as her "emotional outbursts". She had made comments that she was the only one that worked hard and that the department couldn't run without her. The clinic had been short staffed for months. In addition to her own work duties and responsibilities she was doing extra work for other areas and not asking for help. She was not asking her supervisor for help and on occasion she would tell other coworkers what additional work they should be doing.

All of these behaviors were actually her stepping outside of her own circle of responsibility into someone else's (either a coworker's or her supervisor's). She certainly may have been right in what she did but she did not have the responsibility or authority to do so.

What did this employee do to handle the situation and decrease the stress that she was actually putting on herself?

- She started to say "no" to the receptionist when asked to take a call, unless it was urgent.
- She went to her supervisor so that the supervisor was aware of work that needed to be assigned. She gave suggestions for possible solutions versus going directly to her coworkers and telling them what they should be doing. The supervisor took her suggestion and delegated the work.
- She actually accepted her supervisor's offer of help.

The employee found that the biggest lesson to be learned was to keep within her circle of responsibility. When she tried to help too much or go beyond her authority, she experienced a negative consequence. Keeping within her circle of responsibility, the employee made it possible for her supervisor become aware of the problem and to address the workload issues with the department.

What she learned:

- Clearly define what is in your circle of responsibility and what is not.
- Assume appropriate responsibilities but stop taking on responsibilities that are not yours.
- Inform the person who does have the authority and responsibility of any problems or needs.