



Hello and welcome to troubleshooting.

Troubleshooting is an opportunity for us to tackle some of the many challenges that come along with being a supervisor.

These particular issues come directly from you in the Supervisors Circle community. So, if you have your own trouble that you would like us to shoot you can do so by submitting it by email or in the forum. You can also come on here and be live with us and share your problem verbally or you can come and be live and listen to other people's problems and share your opinion or advice or you can watch it later and reflect and we always put the topic in the forum as well.

So, we want to have lots of opportunities for you to engage because in most cases the trouble that is being shot is a trouble that you have experienced, will experience, perhaps you're currently experiencing.

A lot of us, even though our situations are unique and individual, a lot of us experience very similar challenges. So as always as a community, we try to support one another, and this is one of the many ways we're able to do that.

So, let's go ahead and read about this week's issue.

*"I've been a supervisor for a little less than a year and my boss has asked me- told me- I need to fire one of my staff. (Yikes!) He deserves to be fired but he has a lot going on and this will hurt him significantly. I don't feel comfortable doing this. What should I do?"*

If you are a supervisor for any length of time, it is possible perhaps likely that you will need to fire someone. If you don't actually need to fire someone it is highly likely that you will be in a situation where the topic of firing comes up as a possibility, that somebody's performance isn't up to par, that somebody has broken a policy or perhaps even a law. So, there are a lot of reasons people might get fired.

And sometimes it has nothing to do with them doing something egregious. I think a lot of times we equate being fired with doing something egregious and in lots of cases, it's because it's just not a fit for what you bring to the table while amazing. Is it what this particular position requires?

So, there's a lot that can go into when we fire someone, if we should fire someone, how we fire someone.

There's a lot to consider.

We don't know in this example why this person is about to be fired. All we know is that they quote unquote deserve to be fired. So, let's say that it- let's take this for what was given to us and that is not to discuss whether or not to fire this person, but that this person needs to be fired.



There seems to be consensus there, but that there's a lot going on with the person who's about to be fired and the words that were sent in-

*"I don't feel comfortable doing this. What should I do?"*

So, let's talk about the comfort. We will talk about the firing. I promise. But I don't think we can do so without talking about comfort. This is something that is going to come up again and again as a supervisor and it's really important to understand what you do with discomfort.

How that discomfort plays into your role and your effectiveness as a supervisor.

Let's look at things to consider with this particular issue. And the first one is where is the discomfort coming from?

Very early on in one of my jobs. I had my boss ask- me tell me much like in this example- that they wanted me to go before city council and advocate for why we needed to retain our funding.

I was new at this job. I had never testified before a government body before. I barely knew the copy code. I barely knew how to like to check my email. I was so new when my boss asked me to do this. Told me to do this. And my response was, "I'm not comfortable doing this."

And my boss said something that has stuck with me ever since and I'm going to stick it to you so that you can consider it going forward when these multiple situations arise where we feel discomfort.

What my boss said was, are you feeling discomfort because you've never done this before? Or is it somehow going against something you believe in?

We use that word discomfort to capture a lot of things. But there are a lot of situations where the discomfort can mean a lot of different things.

There are moments when we are uncomfortable because we've never done something before. And there are moments when we're uncomfortable because our values, our beliefs are out of line with something that's happening.

It's important to distinguish when we have those feelings of discomfort, where they're coming from.

If it's a case of something unethical, something against my values, something against my beliefs, a path or a decision that I don't think is in the best interest of our clients, our organization, our colleagues.

That's a discomfort that requires further exploration and further discussion.



The discomfort that comes from, I've never done this before. That's a different conversation.

What we get here in this example is a little bit of both. So, it seems that there's a discomfort of, I'm kind of new. I've never done this before. Who in the world is actually comfortable firing someone?!

That's not a person I want to meet, right?

But also, this is going to hurt this person. We don't know in what way, but we know that firing can hurt emotionally, financially and it can stick with you on your career path. A lot of applications ask if you've ever been fired and then in many cases, they won't bother reading any further if you check yes.

It may impact your career because you're so affected by the fact that you've been fired that it's going to follow you wherever you go.

We don't know in what ways it might hurt this person, but we can feel safe, I think in assuming that for most folks getting fired brings with it some other stuff.

Some financial challenges, some career challenges, perhaps some emotional challenges around questioning our value or our worth.

So, it's good and it's right to imagine how this might impact people and we want to make sure that should we need to let someone go we do it in a way that is compassionate and understanding and is the least horrible it can be of a horrible situation.

But we shouldn't hold on to people because of the discomfort. Certainly, if it's an issue of doing something illegal or unethical, of course, we need to let people go.

Many times, it's not because of that. Many times, people just aren't performing, or they may have a lot of wonderful skills, but it's just not a good fit for where they are in that position or at that organization. To me, that's always the hardest but in some ways a little bit easier too because it's not anything they're doing wrong per se. It's just not a good fit.

Whatever the reason is we're told this person deserves to be fired.

So, then this person needs to be fired.

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The discomfort of not having done it before isn't reason not to do it.

But it is a good signal to prepare yourself.

There are a lot of legal implications when it comes to firing. There's a lot of emotional



and ethical considerations. So, you can use that discomfort to your benefit and ultimately to this person's benefit.

To prepare yourself as best as possible and to make the experience the least horrible you possibly can.

But again, when something comes up related to firing or otherwise when the discomfort is coming from a place of something unethical going on potentially something illegal that warrants further explanation, what are the legal implications?

I had to fire someone once somewhat similar to the situation. The person hadn't done anything wrong, but they were in school at the time, and we made some accommodations for the schedule but this upcoming semester they were just going to miss too much work and we just couldn't work around their schedule.

But I'd just come on and so in a way it made it a little bit easier because it wasn't really my decision, and I didn't really have a relationship with this person. But on the flip side, I'd never fired anyone before, and I didn't feel like I had a lot of support and at this particular organization we didn't have an HR department, so I was really concerned for all these reasons.

Particularly like, wait, what is even the right way to do this? What can I say? What can I not say? What happens in terms of like severance and unemployment and all these things I never dealt with before?

When it comes to firing someone specifically make sure that you have the understanding and support of your organization so that legally you are doing everything the legal way and that you are not implicated and at any step of the process that you're protecting yourself and that you have support from your organization so that you're not putting yourself in jeopardy as well as the organization and the person that is being fired.

Whether it's firing someone or it's any other of the many situations that cause us discomfort, what can you do with this discomfort on your journey as a successful supervisor?

In many cases, you're going to want to seek support whether that's from your own supervisor, perhaps from HR, or if you're working with someone like a coach or a mentor, a trusted colleague. We can often really benefit from having that listening ear from getting another perspective about how to move things forward.

We also need to be cautious of things like confidentiality and being careful not to disclose information we shouldn't be disclosing. But there's a lot of things as a supervisor that come up that perhaps you weren't prepared for or perhaps you weren't trained for or perhaps really blindsided you.

One of the things that I've had to learn over time is releasing the need that I felt only put



on by myself to have an answer in the moment.

One of the things I had to learn to do is say, I think I need some time to think more about this.

Initially, I felt like I needed to give an answer immediately for a lot of things that I didn't really have any business giving a decision on or giving my opinion on because I didn't have the information that I needed.

Unless it's an emergency in most cases taking that moment to say, I need to think about this, or we need to talk more about it or I need to talk to my supervisor about it. But taking away that pressure to feel like you have to answer in the moment can really help.

Sometimes sleeping on it literally or figuratively just taking a step back from being right in the midst of it can really help.

Having conversations with somebody who you trust and who is there to support you and has your best interests at heart can really help.

But there are a lot of things that most of us encounter as a supervisor that we would classify as uncomfortable. We need to take that time to reflect and say, Am I saying no, am I avoiding this, am I hesitating because I've just never done it before? Or is there another reason?

Similarly, when you are asking things of your staff and you get the response, well, I'm not comfortable doing that.

Dig into that a little bit in a respectful way of course. Always being respectful.

Pay this lesson forward so to speak and help them work through what exactly about this is uncomfortable for you.

If it's just that they haven't done it before then it becomes a conversation much like the one, we're having now. What support do they need? How can you get them to a place where they feel comfortable? Or maybe they won't feel comfortable, and they do it anyway and supporting them through a process where it's okay to make mistakes, understanding that none of us does it perfect the first time or anytime really but also that it might be kind of a mess the first time we do any of these things right and validating that and recognizing that is normal.

If it becomes a situation of something against values something where somebody feels like there's an ethical challenge here then of course, we need to explore that too.

In the case that we received today, let's go back for a moment.

*"I have to fire this person and I know it's going to hurt him significantly."*





Remember the human side of you.

What can you do to mitigate that hurt? To validate it? Perhaps to set up the person for success going forward. If it is a case where it just wasn't a fit or scheduling issue or something like that where you can feel confident to recommend them elsewhere, that's something that you can offer.

To provide some support. They might need to work through having been fired. If there's ways to whenever possible build up to it and not have someone be completely blindsided that this is about to happen. So, they have a chance to remedy it if they can. Seems like that's not an option here. If they can't remedy it that they at least have some time to prepare for their next steps.

So, yes, you need to follow the rules and the laws that are out there to protect yourself. And also, don't forget to be human so that you can make this process the least horrible that you can make it.

Don't avoid it just because it's uncomfortable for you. Make sure that you have the support that you need but that you are addressing what needs to be addressed.

So, what do you think? Do you have any additional pieces of advice, experiences to share, lessons learned along the way?

You can share them here or you can share them in the forum where we will continue the conversation.

And if you currently or it's sometime in the future have your own issue you'd like to work through, you can come on here live. We'll discuss it with you, or you can submit on your behalf, and we will discuss it and again in the forum so lots of opportunities to work through the issue you're facing.

But don't do it alone. I promise you we all have challenges as we continue to grow as supervisors, and it is highly unlikely that whatever it is you're experiencing that you're the only person who's ever experienced this thing.

So, what we're trying to really embrace in this community is this concept of mutual support and understanding where people can both empathize and sympathize and share lessons and tips and strategies. Sometimes simply a listening ear.

We can't eliminate a lot of challenges and sometimes we can't eliminate them from feeling very challenging, but we can provide this network of support along the way that is a huge, huge help.

Thank you for your time today. I hope this was helpful. And I hope that you will continue to explore this concept of discomfort and how that can serve you as a supervisor how to work through those moments and how to support your staff through them as well. We'll see you next time!