

Civilian Vignette 16 – Mostly Harmless

Topic: Bystander Intervention, Sexual Harassment

Situation: Mostly Harmless

Today PFC Johnson asks for your advice about something observed. PFC Johnson tells you:

“About six months ago, Robin transferred to my office. One of my buddies had worked with Robin before and told me that Robin’s sense of humor was a little weird. At first, everything was fine. Robin was friendly, professional, and we were all getting along well; however, a couple of months ago, I noticed Robin seemed to be a real ‘close talker’ while speaking with Soldiers. A couple of times I heard Robin making inappropriate jokes and comments, asking Soldiers stuff like if they were single and saying things like, ‘You’re too sexy to be a Soldier.’ Once I heard Robin ask one of them if they had any cool tattoos hiding under their uniform.”

“I mentioned this to a leader from my unit who said I was being too sensitive, and that Robin was ‘just a dork’ and ‘mostly harmless’. So, I didn’t say anything else. I didn’t want to ruin Robin’s career just because I had been to too many EO/SHARP trainings.”

Discussion Questions:

1. What would you say to PFC Johnson?
2. What is the culture of the office and how do we know that it is an issue?

Solution:

You should tell PFC Johnson that this type of behavior is not appropriate and could affect the climate within the office. If Robin is allowed to continue this behavior, co-workers could become uncomfortable with the conversations and sexual harassment complaints could be filed. Using the 3D’s (Direct, Delegate, or Distract) could be an effective way to handle this situation without harming anyone’s career. PFC Johnson can also see the SARC or VA.