

Hi, my name is Ken Cooper, and I'm the author of *Stop it Now*, one of the first books to address the topic of sexual harassment. I've also authored books on the related topics of effective training, how to build competencies, body language in business, and building effective organizations.

Now, it turns out that the military is at a crossroads in terms of military sexual trauma, or MST. After years of escalating numbers, during 2002 the trend finally began to reverse. There is a reduction in incidents, and also an increase in reporting. That was the good news. The bad news? The numbers are still horrendous. One in 23 women, and one in a 111 men annually report unwanted sexual contact. In one of the branches, it's one in 12 women. And as far as reporting, it's still very low.

And so the question is, "Where's the next improvement coming from?" Leadership recognizes that it's great the trend's been reverse, but there's more to do. There have been massive resources already applied. There's training available, online learning. There are programs. There are regulations. Everything's in place. So it's not a matter of just doing it more, doing it louder, or doing it more stridently. What's going to be different that makes the difference in terms of the next large gain?

Well, that's we need to talk about, because there are three things our researchers found. One, you need to fix the message. Two, fix the training. And three, provide the tools that are currently missing from the training. So let's just very quickly take a review of what that's about.

### **Number One: Fix the Message**

Fix the message. It's not unavoidable. Sexual assault is not something that happens. It's an act perpetrated on another person. It's not part of the environment. It's not something victims are supposed to protect themselves from. It's supposed to be something that doesn't happen, that is prevented from happening.

It's not on the victim. It's not a program. Do you realize how insulting this is, particularly to target some victims? Sexual assault awareness month? Awareness rather than prevention? And for a month? Can you imagine a civilian sector firm saying, "We're going to have a 'Let's not discriminate against minorities awareness month?'" They'd be torn apart by the critics. They couldn't survive that kind of program. It's not a program. It's a culture. It's an environment that you create. It's not something that you just pay special attention to for a month.

Also, the total focus is on victims, causing them often to be blamed. There's an article: "Female soldier brilliantly calls out military for blaming the victims." It's like victims bring it upon themselves.

Not only that, they're punished for it when they do complain. Recent research found that while the numbers have gone down somewhat in terms of incidents, and the reporting is up, that there is no change whatsoever in the retaliation against those filing complaints. That's still at the same old level. So not only are you blaming victims, but you're punishing victims at the same rate. There's still retaliation. And the same study found that offenders aren't getting consequences in return. So it's a double hit.

Even the messaging you see contains these kinds of damaging images. So here's one—an obvious victim sitting in the foreground, looking way off in the distance, with the message, "Hurts one, effects all." Really? I'm the one who's been assaulted, but they're suffering for it. Really? And then look at the body language. They're all standing separated from their teammate. They're not even looking at her. They're not offering any kind of support or concern. They have stern looks on their faces, or they're looking away with arms crossed. Does this make somebody want to file a complaint with an image like this, and a message like that? It's damaging.

Not only that, some of the messaging actually encourages offenders. Now, if you're sexually harassing, you're either delusional, or you're just dumb. But assault is a crime. It's pathologic behavior. As we know, sexual crime is not about sex. It's about power. It's about domination. It's about damaging control. And so, when you show someone with that attitude these images, it's a payoff. This is what they want. This is what they seek. When you show damaged victims, you're saying to the offender, "Look what you can do. Look what you've done. Look what you've accomplished." It's the exact wrong message to send if you want to stop offenders.

The real question is, "Where are the offender pictures?" Where is a picture of an offender behind bars in a stockade saying, "Hey, here's where you're going to end up if you assault somebody." What about somebody at the table in the court martial, head in hands saying, "There goes my career and my pension." What about those images? There's nothing about offenders here. It's all about the victim, and that's the wrong message. All right, that's number one.

## **Number Two: Fix the Training**

There's a giant elephant in the room nobody wants to talk about, and that is: Everybody hates the training!

You see it every time you talk to somebody, every time we've talked to anybody. Nobody looks forward to the training. Nobody likes the training. Nobody enjoys it. Nobody anticipates it. Everybody rolls their eyes, "I don't want to go to that again." Nobody feels like it really helps

them with anything. You see comments like this all the time, "The most worthless training I've had in 30 years in my career." It's not working.

Not only that, it's not only not working, many times it's making it worse. There are only two topics where if you train wrong, it actually creates more problems. The first topic is diversity training, and that's a discussion for another day. The second is sexual harassment. You can actually destroy team morale and team productivity, team cohesion, if you don't train properly. It's a difference creator. It's humiliating. It's cringe inducing. In a John Q. Public blog, one of the attendees wrote, "You made me a victim today." These are her words, "You made me a helpless whore. You made me look weak, and I'm not weak." And so the training, if not done right, is damaging to the very people you want to help, and damaging the very morale that you're trying to build.

One of the things that came out of the RAND survey is that there seems to be a correlation between harassment and assault. You know, that's something the civilian sector has known for decades. These are not separate topics, like they're handled in the military. In fact, it's almost impossible to find any data on sexual harassment. All the data is on sexual trauma.

And yet the research is, and what we teach is, they are a single continuum of escalating behavior. It starts with low levels of harassment, and ends up at sexual trauma. If you want to stop sexual trauma, then you begin by stopping sexual harassment. They are the same topic. You don't need two training tracks. You need a single training track that treats it as one issue. And the RAND survey proved what we've known all along. All right, that's number two, fix the training.

### **Number three: Do What's Proven to Work**

The best practices are out there. It's having the right focus; then providing concepts and tools; then doing the training properly; then providing the after-the-fact follow up; having contact with and support from the subject matter experts; and coaching on what to do when any incidents do arise.

So what do we mean by the tools? Well, it's the behavioral part that's lacking. People walk out of a session with one side saying, "Oh boy, everybody will cringe when I walk up." The other side is saying, "What do I do now? I'm scared to death to talk to anybody." So it's created more problems.

And by behavioral tools, it's things like what you saw with the 6 Levels of Harassment. It's the 8 Offender Stereotypes. So now somebody doesn't have to come up and say, "Hey, so-and-so's still bothering me." They can now say, "I'm getting Level 3 harassment from a God's Gift to

Women, and I'd like it to stop." And that all means something to everybody, because it's common terminology. It's been used in court cases. It's been used in training. It's been used in business situations for decades.

There are other things like the 13 Early Warning Signs. These are signs that somebody's being harassed, before they ever file a complaint. If leaders are alert to what those signs are, they can prevent incidents before they escalate.

And then, there's background knowledge such as the Male-Female Perception Gap. Or Situational Propriety—how things change based on the situation. What are the Acceptable Zones of Touching? Subliminal Target Signals? What Cultural Indicators tell you that there are harassment problems? Those are just a few of the tools that people need, so you can walk out and say, "Okay, I get it. I understand the other person better. And now I know what I can do, what I can't do, what I should and shouldn't do. And I know how to express when somebody stepped over the line," which is the case that happens most of the time. Just to let somebody know, "Hey, that was just a little bit over the line." And to hear back, "Hey, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to." Then everybody moves on. That's the way it should be handled.

So where do we fit in? Well, we provide these services. We've been doing it for decades. The classroom training, distance learning, live and recorded. We have proprietary content. We have the behavioral tools that are missing from assault and harassment training. We can also provide live distance coaching, video-based or phone based, and the consulting needed to make sure that you're doing things right.

So, what are the next steps? A great thing to do is download our white paper, and get more details on our analysis. And also go to our blog, where we discuss some of the current research, like the RAND study.

Then give us a call, and we'll schedule an online briefing that goes into more detail into what we've introduced here. And it will be just like this, only live and interactive, so we can talk to each other.

Fix the message, fix the training, and add the right behavioral content so service people know what to do. It's not about awareness, it's about prevention. You can e-mail us at info @ Stop MST now dot com, or call us at 636-537-1100.