Children Witness Murder

Jackie Marshall, a 57-year-old grandmother who worked at a McDonald’s restaurant in Chichester, England, was beaten and stabbed to death by Shane Freer in front of horrified customers, including children attending a birthday party. The 21-year-old Freer had been fired following an earlier incident at the restaurant in which he struck a young girl who had lobbed pieces of carrot and wet napkin at him. Freer was fired for gross misconduct.

Marshall did not fire Freer. But Freer believed his termination was her doing. Upon hearing his job was gone, he broke into tears and then said of Marshall, “I’ll kill her. ” True to his word, he purchased an eight-inch hunting knife, returned to the restaurant and stabbed Marshall repeatedly. She died two hours later in hospital. Freer later told police, “I had to kill her; she got me fired.”

Court heard Freer is mentally ill and cannot appreciate how others feel. He believes his actions are justifiable and told doctors he enjoyed violence and may kill again. The court found him guilty of manslaughter by reason of diminished responsibility and sentenced him to life in prison at a secure psychiatric unit.

This tragic case carries an important message for supervisors who might have to fire an employee who seems unstable and could be violent:

    - Don’t do it alone. Ensure there are several other managers present so the person being terminated does not target one person as having done this to him/her.
    - Give the person a chance to vent. Don’t cut the employee off. If the person threatens violence, report any concerns to police.

- Some companies pick up the tab for a terminated employee to see a counselor. However, never force counseling on a distraught employee.