Bullying in the Workplace

The Problem and the Solution

What is Bullying in the Workplace?

- Workplace Bullying is the tendency of individuals or groups to use persistently aggressive or unreasonable behavior against a co-worker or subordinate.
- A type of repeated behavior that is health-harming mistreatment directed at a given target that is committed by one or more perpetrators.

Workplace Bullying in the U.S.

- Nearly half of the American workforce (49%) report being affected by workplace bullying.
- 13% of employees report of currently being bullied.
- 24% of employees state they have been bullied in the past.
- 12% of employees have witnessed workplace bullying.

Who’s At Risk

- In 2007, the Workplace Bullying Institute determined that there were two main risk factors that affect the possibility of a person being bullied in the workplace.

  - Gender
  - Race

Gender

- Women appear to be at greater risk of becoming a bullying target as 57% of those who reported being targeted for abuse were women.
- Men are more likely to participate in aggressive bullying behavior (60%)
- Women who bully tend to target other women (70% reported)

Race

- Race plays a major role in the event of Workplace Bullying.
- 46% of African Americans report of being bullied.
- 34% of Caucasians report of being bullied.
- 31% of Asians report of being bullied.
Race Continued

- 21% of African Americans reported witnessing bullying at work.
- 11% of Caucasians reported witnessing workplace bullying.
- 9% of Asians reported witnessing bullying while at work.

Race & Percentages Con’t

- 57% of Asians reported they have neither experienced or witnessed any bullying.
- 50% of Caucasians reported no exposure to any type of workplace bullying.
- 23% of African Americans reported no exposure to any type of bullying in the workplace.

Types of Bullying Behavior

The 5 different types of Bullying Behaviors

- **Threat to Professional Status** – belittling comments, public humiliation, accusations of lack of effort.
- **Threat to Personal Standing** – undermining personal integrity, sarcasm, inappropriate comments or jokes to target, persistent teasing, name calling, insults, intimidation.

5 Types of Bullying Con’t

- **Isolation** – preventing access to information or opportunities, physical or social alienation, withholding of necessary information, ignore, exclude.
- **Overwork** – impossible deadlines, undue pressure, unnecessary disruptions.
- **Destabilization** – failure to acknowledge good work, allocation of meaningless tasks, removal of responsibility, repeated reminder of blunders, setting the target up to fail.

Workplace Bullying Tactics Include:

- **Verbal Abuse**
- **Nonverbal Abuse**
- **Psychological Abuse**
- **Physical Abuse**
- **Humiliation**
- **Work Interference**

Tactics of Workplace Bullies

- Falsely accuse someone of errors
- Stare or glared looks, nonverbal intimidation
- Discounting of a person’s thoughts or feelings
- Use of the “Silent Treatment”
- Exhibit “uncontrollable” mood swings toward a person
- Made-up own set of rules on the fly
- Disregarded satisfactory quality work
- Hard constant criticism
- Starting of or failing to stop the destructive rumors
- Encouraging others to turn against the person
- Single out employee, make example of
- Isolation of one person from co-workers
**Tactics Continued**

- Public display of inappropriate behavior towards person.
- Yelling and screaming at person to humiliate.
- Stealing of credit of work from co-worker.
- Abuse of evaluation process by lying about person's performance.
- Falsely declaring target as "insubordinate" for not following direction.
- Using confidential information about target to humiliate.
- Retaliation against person after complaint was filed.
- Made verbal insults based on gender, race, accent, age, language, disability.
- Assigned meaningless work as punishment.
- Created unrealistic demands (workload, deadlines, duties).
- Launched a baseless campaign to oust the person.
- Encourage person to quit or transfer to avoid further mistreatment.
- Subjeged a person's work or contribution to result in failure.

**Abusive Workplace Behaviors**

- Disrespect and Devalue the person.
- Overwork and Devalue personal life.
- Harassment through Micromanagement.
- Manipulate Information.
- Control or manage by threats and intimidation.
- Steal credit.
- Prevent access to opportunities.
- Insulting and offensive remarks made about person.
- Main responsibilities replaced with trivial tasks.

**Abuse Workplace Behaviors Con’t**

- Downgrade employee’s abilities.
- Ignoring of views and opinions.
- Withholding of information to affect performance.
- Given unmanageable workload.
- Assigning of impossible targets or deadlines.
- Ordered to do work below their competence.
- Ignored behavior or hostility when approached.
- Humiliation and ridiculed behavior over work.
- Excessive Micromanagement.
- Spreading gossip.

**Forms of Workplace Bullying**

- Serial Bullying - a bully who picks on person after person.
- Secondary Bullying - due to the fear of being bullied others bully.
- Pair Bullying - one active bully, the other bully watches and listens.
- Group Bullying - a serial bully with peers.
- Vicarious Bullying - other people encourage the bully and target to fight.
- Regulation Bullying - targets forced to follow rules regardless of necessity.
- Residual Bullying - behavior continues after bully is removed.
- Pressure Bullying - unrealistic timeframe with inadequate resources.
- Corporate Bullying - employer abuses targets knowing they are exempt.
- Institutional Bullying - accepted part of work environment and culture.
- Cyber Bullying - use of technology to impose hostile behavior.

**Problems of the Workplace Bully**

- The workplace bully usually has issues with social functioning.
- Poor self-image, low self-esteem.
- Lack of self-awareness, poor people skills.
- Habitually cruel in behavior towards others they deem as weaker.
- Bullies often lack in anger management skills.
- Have a distorted sense of reality.
- Act aggressively in their behavior.
- At times are unaware of the harm they cause.
- Psychopathic traits that are hard to identify.

**The toll of the Workplace Bully**

- The impact of the workplace bully is not only overwhelming to the target but to the employer as well...
- Bullies create an abusive work environment.
- For the target, the workplace bully can harm their physical health and well-being.
- Some of the negative effects from bullying may cause a person physical, psychological, and emotional damage.
Additional Negative Effects

- Stress is the most predominant health side effect associated with workplace bullying.
- Some of the severe negative effects of bullying are post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and in some cases suicide.
- In addition, co-workers who witness workplace bullying can suffer from hopelessness, helplessness, fear, stress, and emotional exhaustion.

Financial Costs of Bullying

The National Institute for Occupational Safety determined that billions of $ are lost annually.

- Mental illness brought on by bullying contributes to the loss of employment.
- Workplace Bullying contributes to the drop in an employee’s productivity.
- Replacement costs of the employee who leaves as a result of being bullied or being a witness.

How Workplace Bullies Operate

- Workplace Bullies generally use words and actions to intimidate their victims.
- A workplace bully may be your boss or co-worker.
- Bullies are looking for the target to show fear or weakness.
- If you are being verbally or physically threatened do not hesitate to act.
- Report the situation to Human Resources.

How to Deal With the Bully

- Tell your manager about the bullying events and the impact their behavior is causing you.
- Speak with co-workers to see if they are experiencing the same problem.
- Document and keep a log of all bullying instances.
- Try and confront the bully about their behavior and if you cannot confront them write a summary. Again document!
- Keep copies of anything referring to your job inability.
- Avoid being left alone with the bully and try to get witnesses.
- Make a collective complaint with colleagues.
- Seek advice from a trusted mentor regarding situation.

How to deal with the Bully Con’t

- If confronting the bully do so in a calm, professional manner.
- Do not yell or threaten; do not show any signs of weakness.
- Do not try and win the bully over or try and win others over to your side.
- Do not allow the bully to intimidate you or make you feel bad about yourself.
- Do your job well. Keep in mind the workplace bully wants you to fail.
- Make sure your supervisors are aware of your quality work.
- Workplace bullies often spread rumors that the target is not doing their job reporting the smallest infractions to management.
- Again if the behavior of the bully continues report this immediately to HR.
- Document, Document, Document!

Addressing the Bullying Behavior

- Recognize the bullying behavior either as the target or a witness.
- Document the abusive incidents involving the workplace bully.
- Be specific, indicate the dates, times, behaviors, statements, and actions.
- Know your rights, consult Human Resources regarding the company’s policy and procedure.
- Expose the bully, file a formal complaint with your documentation.
How Managers Deal with a Bully

- Write a policy on bullying.
- Train management and staff about policy and intolerance of workplace bullying.
- Encourage employees to report bad behavior.
- Discuss with HR about adding workplace bullying to your company’s discrimination procedure.
- Develop workplace culture that doesn’t tolerate bullying.

Additional Management Info

- Take control of the situation.
- Confront the bully sooner, not later.
- Target the behavior, not the person.
- Enforce a clear action plan.
- Document specific occurrences.
- Follow company’s policy on bullying.
- Determine if the offender should be written up, referred to EAP, required to receive counseling, given time off without pay, or terminated.
- Help create workplace into culture of respect.

3 Steps to Stop Bullying

- What can I do to stop bullying at work?

  Step 1: Regain Control (You’re not the problem)
  Step 2: Plan for Action (Your Game Plan)
  Step 3: Take Action (Document & Report)

For more information...

- www.workplacebullying.org
- www.bullyonline.org
- www.healthyworkplacebill.org
- www.newworkplaceinstitute.org