

# Bullying in the Workplace



## *Bullying in the workplace is:*

- 4300 times more common than workplace homicide
- 4 times more common than physical workplace assault
- 2-3 times more common than Civil Rights Violations
- Perpetrators are 50% males and 50% females

## Are you a victim?

Workplace bullying (psychological or emotional abuse), is a deliberate, repeated mistreatment of a targeted employee by one or more people in the workplace. The bully can be a staff or subordinate, but more than 80% of workplace bullies are supervisors, managers and executives, equally male or female. When a person (target) is being bullied, this damages the targets physical and psychological health, and threatens their job security. Workplace bullying is the opposite of the childhood bullying scenario, where an unpopular and weak child is picked on. With workplace bullying, the victim is often well educated and competent in their job, which poses a threat to the bully. As a result, the bully seeks to rid of them. The intimidation and manipulation in workplace bullying are similar to those behaviors observed in Intimate Partner Violence. It is a problem where "boundaries" are crossed, and communication, productivity, and personal health suffer.

## Bullying behaviors

- Insults & put-downs
- Criticism of ability
- Constant blame for "errors"
- Unreasonable job demands
- Threat of loss of job
- Not being included (isolation)
- Inconsistent compliance with rules
- Taking credit for the targets good work or ideas
- Yelling/screaming-usually behind closed doors
- Saying "you are just too sensitive"

## Effects to the workplace

- ✓ Loss of productivity
- ✓ Increased sick leave
- ✓ Increase of workman's compensation cases
- ✓ Increase stress leave
- ✓ Effect of staff moral
- ✓ High staff turnover
- ✓ Increased employer legal costs
- ✓ Equal opportunity mediation



## Health effects among the victim

### Physical

- Frequent colds, coughs, flu (especially on days off)
- Aches & pains with no clear cause (diagnosed-fibromyalgia)
- Back pain
- Headaches & migraines
- Chest pain, angina, heart attack
- High blood pressure
- Sweating
- Anxiety, palpitations, breathlessness
- Asthma
- Hormonal problems, disrupted menstrual cycle, loss of libido, impotence
- Physical numbness (toes, lips & fingers)
- Poor circulation, cold extremities, such as fingers and toes
- Emotional numbness/depression
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Paruresis (shy bladder syndrome)
- Thyroid problems
- Petit mal seizures, skin irritations & disorders
- Loss of appetite (or excessive eating)
- Excessive or abnormal thirst
- Sleeplessness & feeling tired when you wake up
- Chronic Illness (diabetes, asthma, fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis, chronic fatigue syndrome, forms of cancer, heart attack, etc.)

### Behavioral

- Irritability, angry outbursts
- Risk of violent outbreak
- Obsessiveness
- Hyper vigilance
- Hypersensitivity
- Mood swings
- Withdrawal
- Loss of humor
- Hyperawareness
- Excessive biting, teeth grinding
- Increased reliance on drugs (caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, sleeping pills)
- Comfort spending
- Loss of self-worth & love

### Psychological

- Panic attacks
- Reactive depression
- Thoughts of suicide & suicide attempts
- Forgetfulness,
- Poor concentration
- Unusual degree of fear, sense of isolation, insecurity
- PTSD
- Phobias
- Sleep disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Mood disorder
- Eating disorder
- Anxiety disorder
- Panic disorder

## TYPE 1: The Constant Critic

Extremely negative, a nitpicker, perfectionist, whiner, complainer, fault finder, a liar. They are loved by senior management because of their ability to "get people to produce." This type of bully destroys the employee or target of their self-confidence and encourages self-doubt. They do this by:

- Putting the person down, insulting, making belittling comments, name-calling
- Constant arguing about Target's "incompetence"
- Makes aggressive eye contact, glaring at Target; demands eye contact when she speaks but deliberately avoids eye contact when Target speaks
- Negatively reacts to contribution of target [sighs, frowns, peering over top of eyeglasses to condescend, sour face ("just sucked a lemon" look)]
- Accuses Target of wrongdoing, blamed for errors made up by bully (doctored documents, compromised databases, fake witness accounts)
- Makes unreasonable work demands, impossible deadlines, disproportionate pressure, expects perfectionism
- Sends signals of disrespect through hyper-confident body language - sitting at desk with feet up, showing target bottom of shoes and talking to target through feet, bully grooms self (hair, nails) while ignoring the Target; making target sit while bully stands, hovering over them
- Over-use of memos, e-mails, messages to bury Target in correspondence
- Requiring replies personally criticizes aspects of the Target's life that are irrelevant to work--appearance, family, friends
- Excessively or harshly criticizes Target's work or abilities
- Engages Target in intense cross-examination to belittle and confuse

Source: *The Bully At Work*, ©2000 with permission by Gary and Ruth Namie, Workplace Bullying & Trauma Institute

## TYPE 2: The Two-Headed Snake

The Two-Headed Snake is a Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde passive-aggressive behavior-a dishonest style. They often pretend to be nice while sabotaging you.

"Friendliness" serves only to give them information that they can later use against you. They often play favorites with staff in the organization.

- Demands that co-workers provide damning "evidence" against Target, uses lies or half-truths, threatens non-cooperators (the "divide and conquer" technique)
- Discriminates against smokers by requiring they gather trash from the parking lot while taking a smoke break
- Assigns meaningless or "dirty" tasks as punishment
- Makes nasty, rude, hostile remarks directly to Target while putting on a rational "face" for others
- Breaches confidentiality; shares private information about the Target with co-workers or other bosses
- Discriminates against non-smoking Target by permitting breaks only for smokers
- Creates a special personnel file kept in bully's car or locked in office full of defamatory information to sabotage Target's career inside or outside the organization
- Steals credit for work done by the target

## TYPE 3: The Gatekeeper

The Gatekeeper is the most transparent of all controllers. The bully makes themselves "one up" on you, to order you around and control you. To the bully, control of all resources (time, supplies, praise, approval, money, staffing, help) is the most important aspect of work. Approval must be solicited from bully at all times.

- Ignores the Target; giving the "silent treatment," and isolating the Target
- Sets office clocks 15 minutes ahead of "real" time, then punishes Target for being "late" at start of day, while not allowing her to leave before quitting time according to "real" time
- Deliberately cuts the Target out of the communication loop--stops mail, e-mail, memo distribution, doesn't return calls
- Refuses to make "reasonable accommodation" for Target returning to work with a disability
- Refuses to follow internal policies and government-mandated employee protections for Target
- Denies privileges and rights to Targets who file complaints against the bully, either an internal complaint or a lawsuit or with the EEOC, DOL
- Makes up rules on a whim, Target expected to follow, but bully is exempt

## TYPE 4: The Screamer

The Screamer is the stereotypical bully who controls through fear & intimidation, emotionally out of control, impulsive and explosive where the threat of physical violence can become an issue. This bully is overbearing, self-centered, and insensitive to needs of others. They are overly concerned of being detected as an imposter and masks their incompetence.

- Yells, screams, curses
- Barks out loud often that "I AM YOUR BOSS" "FOLLOW MY COMMANDS"
- Poisons workplace with angry outbursts, tantrums
- Intimidates through gestures: finger pointing, slams things down, throws objects
- Crowds the Target's personal space, moves close to threaten or to make the Target anxious, hovers over, sneaks up from behind to startle
- Constantly interrupts the Target during meetings and conversations
- Discounts and denies Target's thoughts or feelings
- Threats of job loss or change
- Traps Target by insisting that complaints go "up the chain of command," starting with them