Nobody Likes a Bully: Bullying in the Workplace

Presenter

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Main Topics

• Define bullying
• Explain how bullying affects employees and organizations
• Recognize contributing factors
• Identify steps and strategies to address bullying
• Explore preventative measures
Formal Definition

- Groups or individuals engaging in unreasonable actions repeatedly with the intention to intimidate
  - May involve abuse or misuse of power
  - Includes intimidation, degradation, and humiliation
  - May be covert and/or overt

Examples of Bullying

- Threatening an individual’s work status
- Making inappropriate references to age and gender and spreading untrue accusations
- Withholding important information, taking credit for work, and exerting undue pressure
- Establishing impossible deadlines and quantity of work
- Setting the individual up to fail, demeaning their work publicly, and/or continually bringing up past mistakes

When is it Not Bullying?

- The supervisor has reasonable grounds to deny a promotion, to take disciplinary action, or to terminate an employee based on sound organizational policies
- Different from strong management or having a “tough” supervisor
- Different from harassment
Poll

How often do you either experience or witness bullying in the workplace?

A. Frequently  
B. Seldom  
C. Never

Statistics on Bullying

- Two national workplace bullying studies conducted by The Workplace Bullying Institute and Zogby International found that:
  - 35% of workers have been the target of bullying
  - An additional 15% of employees have witnessed bullying
  - 62% of bullies are men whereas an estimated 58% of targets are women
  - Over two-thirds (68%) of bullying is either between two women or two men
  - 45% of workplace bullying victims cope with health concerns as a result of stress
  - Workers have been the target of bullying

How Bullying Affects Employees

- Creates unnecessary stress
- Decreased ability to focus
- Communication breakdowns and reduction in collaborative efforts
- Loss of motivation and energy
- Reduces self-esteem
- Depression
- Digestive and muscular disorders
- Increase in accidents and mishaps
### How Bullying Affects Organizations

- Lower productivity due to time spent giving and receiving consolation, interviewing replacement staff, and slower turnaround time in project completion
- Increased frequencies of grievances, resignations, and transfer requests
- Rising levels of absenteeism
- Decrease in morale
- Stifles creativity and ability to respond to change
- Affects witnesses of bullying in addition to the intended targets, including clients, and co-workers

### Contributing Factors

- Large scale organizational change
- Changes in management
- Introduction of new technology
- Characteristics such as age, gender, and position level
- Intense work culture
- Shortage of personnel/budget cuts
- Interpersonal conflict

### Additional Contributing Factors

- Inadequate supervision and communication about specific job duty assignment
- Job insecurity
- Targets and witnesses may be hesitant to speak out
- Perception that the organization will not appropriately address the situation
Poll

How do you normally deal with inappropriate behavior in the workplace?

A. I stand up for myself
B. I let it slide
C. I speak with a supervisor or HR staff member

Addressing Bullying: Actions for Employees

• Recognize the behavior is bullying and that it is inappropriate
• Realize that it’s about power, not your personal worth
• Keep a diary detailing specific instances
• Avoid retaliating with inappropriate behavior
• Retain supporting evidence

More Actions for Employees

• Learn about the organization’s specific process for addressing the situation
• Firmly express to the bully that the behavior is unacceptable
• If you feel too intimidated by the bully or if it is an immediate supervisor, speak to an HR representative prior to confronting the individual
• Communicate with your EAP
Approaches to Addressing Bullying

• Identify the presence of inappropriate behavior
• Investigate the situation
• Control the risk factors
• Evaluate and review effectiveness of action taken

Additional Measures

• Include employee participation in the decision making
• Maintain an open door policy with an independent employee contact to assist
• Monitor indications that bullying is occurring, and identify contributing factors

Employer Responses

• Create an awareness campaign for managers and employees
• Keep management actively involved
• Communicate that bullying is unacceptable in a direct and clearly understood manner
• Develop specific policies to address consequences of bullying and inappropriate behaviors that are based on sound management theories
• Take claims seriously and promptly look into those situations
What if You are the Bully?

• Recognize there is a problem with the behavior that could have severe repercussions for your career
• Identify stressors leading to the desire to bully
• Understand that you may not fully grasp the intensity of your communication and that others have the right to object
• Seek help from your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Resources

Contact your EAP or Work-Life Program for Assistance

Thank you

Questions?

Please complete the short online evaluation after exiting from this webinar.
Works Cited


