

How to Deal with Bullying in the Workplace

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“It comes just like sexual harassment-uninvited, undeserved, and unwarranted” – Gary Namie

Bully - a person who habitually seeks to harm or intimidate those whom they perceive as vulnerable.

To explore and dig deeper into the topic of bullying, TopResume surveyed more than 1,000 working professionals. The results were very telling. Of the 1,229 respondents, only four per cent said they have never felt bullied in the workplace. This means that 96 per cent of respondents have felt bullied at work. If you think bullying only comes from those in a position of power, like a manager or a boss, you may want to think again. In that same survey, 25 per cent of respondents said they have felt bullied by a peer or co-worker.

Being bullied at work can harm both your mental and your physical health, with potential side effects such as major stress, anxiety, depression, trauma and high blood pressure.

This article shall explore different kinds of bullies and as well give tips to help deal with bullies in the workplace.

The Four Types of Workplace Bullies

According to the WBI survey, 61 per cent of workplace bullies are bosses. This means that the others are peers and even lower-level employees. This shows that bullying can come from any direction in the organisational chart and it can take different forms. Below are four kinds of bullies you may encounter and the behaviours they display:

1. The Screaming Mimi (Aggressive Communication)

This type of bully tends to make a public scene and instil fear not only in their targets but in their co-workers as well, who might be terrified of speaking up for fear of becoming the next target.

Aggressive communication can include not only yelling, sending angry messages and emails and other verbal forms of hostility, but also the use of aggressive body language. This can be one sitting with his feet on the desk during meetings or throwing papers and files around when angered.

1. The Constant Critic (Disparagement and Humiliation)

This is when, for example, bosses and managers criticise everything you do. He/she will chastise you regularly when you make a mistake and makes sure that you never take credit for any of your success. This person can make you feel as though you are the weakest link in the group.

This kind of bully is referred to as the 'Constant Critic'. They will disparage you so often that you begin to doubt your abilities and wear you down so much that your quality of work might objectively suffer. This bully may humiliate you one-on-one or in a public setting by pointing out your mistakes, taking credit for your work, leaving you out of things and socially isolating you.

1. The Gatekeeper (Manipulation and Withholding of Resources)

This person might criticise you for doing things wrong or differently when he never gave you instructions in the first place. In some cases, the boss or manager can get angry at you for not doing tasks you were never told to tackle.

Some bullies manipulate their targets and withhold resources – whether it be instructions, information, time or help from others, thus, setting you up for failure. They may tell you about three steps of the process when there are actually five, or pile on so much work on you such that there is no reasonable way for you to complete it by the deadline.

The gatekeeper can be a peer or subordinate as well. They may deliberately not invite you to an important meeting or pass on pertinent details that will prevent you from doing your job.

1. The Two-Headed Snake (Behind the Scenes Meddling)

This type of bully is one of the most difficult ones to detect and therefore, is difficult to deal with. This one pretends to be your friend while undermining you behind your back. They may call you "unreliable and unskilled" behind your back but to your face, they are your friend. You may find out eventually if someone tips you off, but often the bully will ask people to keep their remarks confidential. This makes it easy for them to get away with it.

Most bullies get away with bullying others because often they are high performers. They may be the most innovative person in your department and so they bring value to the company. This means the company has the incentive to keep them on board. However, here are some suggestions to consider if you find yourself at the mercy of workplace bullying.

1. Take action before it has a negative impact on you

Understandably, many individuals are afraid to speak up when they are being bullied. They might be concerned about what others will think. If the bully is their boss or someone in a position of power, then one's livelihood could be at stake. With that said, ongoing, long-term bullying can have a negative impact on your overall well-being, which in turn can have a negative impact on your performance and ability to do your work. Take care of yourself and develop an action plan to address the concern.

1. Tell your higher-ups

If you are not comfortable speaking to the individual who is bullying you directly, then you might need to discuss it with your manager or human resources. Choose the course of action that feels best for you

for your situation.

When addressing your concern with others, do not play the blame game. Come up with a plan of how you are going to address the bullying concern and be sure to include its impact on productivity, well-being, and morale coupled with some possible solutions.

1. Leave if it is not worth it

Your well-being is most important, and without it, you're no good to anyone. If you have done all you can to eliminate the bullying but it is still occurring, then it might be time to explore other options. Consider opportunities in other departments or with a new company altogether.

1. Do your research

Does your company have a policy about bullying, mistreatment, verbal abuse or anything similar that you may be able to reference? Check your employee handbook or any other document that lays out the organisation's values and expectations. It may strengthen your case if you are able to point to that language if you decide to file a complaint.

1. Check Yourself

If you feel you are being bullied at work, you should take inventory of ways you might be contributing to the challenging situation. It could be that you are doing nothing to provoke the bullying, which often is the case, but the point is to truly size up the situation and take responsibility if you may be invoking the behaviour in any way. From that perspective, you can determine the best way to deal with the situation.

Keep in mind that people make mistakes. Take a moment to size up the situation and determine if the "bullying" was simply a one-time incident due to someone having a bad day. If yes, then consider letting it go and moving on.

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