Bullying in the Workplace
Facilitator’s Guide

Prepared for Barbara Thompson
University of Central Florida
Office of Diversity Initiatives

By
Brittney Adams,
Rex Erwin,
Ashley Kelley,
And Zachary Sawyer

Professor Gomrad
ENC 4294
University of Central Florida

Common Types of
Workplace Bullying

Pressure Bullying

Most employees in a workplace environment at one time or another are the victim or the bully of Pressure bullying. This type of bullying occurs when a person, in the heat of the moment, snaps. The behavior of this type of bully can range from irritability and short-temperedness to swearing and shouting. However, when the pressure is removed this bully returns to normal behavior. Also, after the outburst, the bully usually apologizes and is able to learn from their experience. Due to the frequency of this type of bullying, and the return of the bully to normal, apologetic behavior, many businesses do not consider this behavior actual bullying (Bully Online).

Yet, while not all businesses recognize this type of bullying as actual bullying, once a person has given in to pressure bullying the damage has been done. This type of bullying can ruin a person’s reputation at the office, causing the bully to be viewed as a loose cannon by their coworkers. For example, coworkers may become wary about participating in group work with someone who has exhibited pressure bullying behavior. Group work often includes stress inducing deadlines which would make others apprehensive of the bully losing their cool under the pressure of a time limit.

Luckily, this type of bullying is an easier kind to deal with. As mentioned, this bully will calm down after their outburst, make amends, and be less likely to react in such a way again. Coworkers, while accepting of this bully’s apologies, should make clear to the bully that such behavior will not be tolerated in the future in order to prevent prolonged pressure bullying (Bully Online).

Prolonged Pressure Bullying

This type of bullying is just like pressure bullying, except that this type of bullying is recurring, showing that the bully has not learned from their former outburst. Unlike pressure bullying in which the bully loses their temper and returns to normal behavior, this type of prolonged pressure bully does not stop losing their temper.

The recurring nature of this type of bullying can result in the bully being fired as their lack of stress management becomes more and more apparent. Also, this type of bullying leads to decreased cooperation and increased anxiety for both the bully and the victims of prolonged pressure bullying (Bully Online).
Organizational Bullying

This type of bullying is a combination of two types of bullying: pressure and corporate. Like the previously mentioned bullying, organization bullying usually stems from pressure. However, this pressure comes from sources that affect the entire company such as struggling to adapt to changing markets, reducing income, cutting budgets, imposing expectations, and other external pressures.

This type of bullying may cause employees to suffer under unrealistic standards. They may also cause workers to develop a new behavior or mentality to keep their job and make it in the workplace ("Contexts").

Corporate Bullying

This type of bullying is perhaps one of the most common types of bullying in the workplace. Corporate Bullying occurs when employees feel their job is threatened by their employers through certain underhanded standards. For example, if a boss asks their employees to work after hours on a regular basis and then dismisses or mistreats any employee who objects, then they are demonstrating corporate bullying.

Types of this kind of bullying include coercion to work without breaks and vacations and even regularly spying on employees ("Contexts").

Serial Bullying

Serial bullying is the most common type of bullying in the workplace. A serial bully is one who repeatedly intimidates or harasses person after person, completely wreaking the person’s esteem and sense of self. In the workplace, this can damper both the work environment and the overall quality of work. This can also have more serious effects on the victim such as depression, anxiety, and suicide ("Contexts").

Pair Bullying

This type of bullying is just like serial bullying except there are two bullies involved; typically of opposite gender, working together to intimidate or harass another person. One bully usually speaks while the other watches. Yet, in some cases the second bully may or may not be known to the one being bullied so it is especially important to recognize this type of bullying so all participants can be addressed ("Contexts").
Identifying a Workplace Bully

Unfortunately, bullies in the workplace are usually not identifiable until the departments they work in have already been negatively affected. The signs to identify a bully within a department are as follows:

- Staff turnover
- sickness absence
- stress breakdowns
- deaths in service
- ill-health retirements
- early retirements
- uses of disciplinary procedures
- grievances initiated
- suspensions
- dismissals
- use of private security firms to spy on employees
- litigation such as employment tribunals or legal action against employees

How to Know if You are Being Bullied

Some victims of bullying may not realize they are being bullied since they may have been taught that such bullying is acceptable. Even worse, victims may believe they deserve to be bullied. However, if someone is frequently subjecting you to the following, it may be a sign that person is a bully:

- Constantly criticized and nit-picked
- undermined and overruled both one-on-one and in front of others
- singled out by different treatment (such as allowing an older employee to text on their phone at work, while writing up a newer employee for the same thing)
- isolated and excluded
- subjected to swearing, offensive personal remarks, and other inappropriate language from others
- subjected to unwanted sexual advances and other behaviors from others
- Encouraged to accept blame and guilt

These are some of the most common feelings and behaviors associated with being a victim of bullying. However, there are some less noticeable examples of bullying within the workplace. Some may not realize that specific treatment concerning your work and time at the office can also be considered bullying.
Did You Know You May Also be a Victim of Bullying if You are...

**Subjected to unrealistic goals and deadlines**

These goals and deadlines include those that are changed at the last minute or without notice or reason.

- Denied access to key information and resources for your work and goals.
- Unsupported by management
- Overloaded with work or given no work except for demeaning menial tasks
- Given increased responsibility with a decrease in authority
- Refused face-to-face communication and eye contact
- Excessively monitored and micro-managed
- Unfounded and/or coerced written or verbal complaints and warnings by other employees
- Threatened with dismissal with refusal to work long hour without compensation
- Denied annual, sickness, and other types of leave with or without unjustifiable attached conditions.
- Harassed by excessive calls, usually at unreasonable hours, when on leave or holiday (Wilson).

**General Side Effects of Workplace Bullying**

Recently, workplace bullying has become an increasingly important issue as more awareness is spreading regarding its negative effects on employees. Also, many companies’ reputations are beginning to suffer as a result of their tolerance of bullying behavior. Victims of workplace aggression have been found to have lower levels mental and physical health. The symptoms these employees may experience may be anything from headaches, stomach problems, depression, sleep disturbances and eventually even suicidal and homicidal thoughts, attempts, and actions.

Also, along with less job satisfaction, targets of workplace bullying may become resentful and hateful towards their job, supervisor, or office. Targets of bullying are more likely to become closed off to their fellow employees, making them hard to work with. These targets can then become rude and offensive to clients and customers seemingly without reason as they struggle to cope with the mental and even potential physical harm that comes from being bullied. This may especially affect those working in a people based field, such as hospitality or service. This is particularly noticeable as these victims of bullying may not smile enough or show the type of friendly attitude towards customers that they should in response to their feelings and experiences of being
harassed at work. As victims take out their hurt on costumers and fellow employees, overall sales and retention of regular customers and clients decrease.

**Resolving Workplace Bullying**

While it may be impossible to completely eliminate bullying behavior at the workplace, there are some simple methods that can help prevent bullying. These methods will teach company employees that bullying will not be tolerated, and if and when bullying does arise that it can dealt with in an appropriate manner.

**Prevention Programs**

One of the most effective ways to safeguard against bullying is to have prevention programs in place. These programs, once implemented, focus on and reduce aggression and other negative behaviors in the workplace. For example, a commonly used program is peer mediation since it is confidential and gives a voice to both parties. This program helps identify what fuels the bully’s behavior, as well as allowing to the victim to become humanized to the bully through expressing their emotions and viewpoint as the victim (Wilson).

**Personnel Selection**

Another program that can be implemented is personnel selection. Personnel selection is when an organization screens and tests potential employees to identify who are likely to be aggressive before they are hired. By alerting the testers not to hire those disposed to bullying behavior, this program prevents those unable to cooperate with others in an unaggressive manner from becoming a threat to a productive workplace environment.

**Training**

This method of training does exactly what is called: training of supervisor and employees in dealing with aggression. By allowing workers safe modes of dealing with their anger, bullying from pent up frustration or similar unhandled feelings can be redirected and released.
Confronting a Workplace Bully

Often, it may be even more difficult for an employee to confront a workplace bully than a bully outside of the victim’s work environment. A workplace bully may pose many difficulties, for example, in the workplace the bully may hold a higher position than the victim. In this situation, even if the victim directly confronts the bully in a tactful manner, the bully may respond by becoming even more aggressive. While ideally direct confrontation is advised since the bully may not realize how hurtful his or her actions are, the victim may not always feel safe in regard to their emotional, mental, and job security in using this approach. An aggressive bully in a higher position may see a direct confrontation from the victim as a threat and fire the victim. However, there are other ways the victim can get help rather than direct confrontation which may have more potential negative consequences (Wilson).

After direct confrontation, or if direct confrontation is not possible, then the next step in confronting a workplace bully and receiving help is to tell a human resources representative. Yet, in cases of extreme workplace bullying this may not be enough.

Here are some ways to confront extreme workplace bullying if the first two steps in the confrontation process have failed:

**Legal action**

Dealing with a workplace bully through legal means can be difficult and may even end up being reflected back poorly on the victim. Legally, there are not many laws that directly deal with bullying regarding general teasing, offhand comments or isolated incidents. Rather, they are generally viewed as permissible and viewed as the use of freedom of speech. If the victim is bullied for their sexual orientation, race, or physical appearance, the bully is violating discrimination laws. Otherwise, the victim can file for workmen’s compensation and intentional infliction of emotional distress lawsuits. This option may backfire on the victim as such claims may embarrass the company or cause employers to see the victim as the one taking advantage of the company instead of the bully. This can threaten the victim’s job security and also create issues when seeking future jobs. (Wilson).

**Media action**

In cases of extreme bullying, coming out to the media with the victim’s case may result in a public outcry, forcing the company to deal with the bully. This should be considered a last step if all else has failed as many companies may see the media
attention as a problem brought on by the victim rather than the bully, causing the victim to be held in ill repute with the company which may even lead to the victim being dismissed.

**Organizational Action and Advocacy**

Outside organizations can help protect victims of workplace bullying or lobby for their rights by bringing the need to deal with workplace bullying to the forefront. Here are some departments and organizations that may help a victim with a workplace bully:

- United States Department of Labor
- The United States Secretary of Labor.
- FCC Federal Communication Commission, Office of Legislative Affairs, Office of Workplace Diversity Department
- US Senate Committee on Health, Education and Labor Pensions
- Human Rights Commission
- US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

(Wilson)

**Individual Advocacy**

As an individual, much can be done to spread awareness of workplace bullying so that future bullying may be prevented. Through such means as newspaper editorials, petitions, and meeting with government representatives, an individual can bring attention to their cause.

**Source:** [http://www.overcomebullying.org/bullying-at-work.html](http://www.overcomebullying.org/bullying-at-work.html)
Types of Bullying in the Workplace

The importance of words

When bullying occurs in the workplace, it comes in many forms. Verbal attacks are often committed by bullies. Some people realize the actions of their words, while others have a more difficult time grasping the concept. This activity will help people understand the importance of words.

Toothpaste Activity

1. Set a strip of masking tape and a tube of toothpaste on a table at the front of the room.
2. Tape a piece of masking tape on the table and ask a volunteer to come up to the table.
3. Ask your partner to squeeze out some toothpaste along the tape.
4. Ask your partner to put the toothpaste back into the tube that he or she has just squeezed out onto the tape.

After a few attempts, you and your partner should realize that this is an impossible task. The toothpaste cannot be placed back into the tube. This demonstrates that once something hurtful is said, it cannot be taken back. This allows for bullies and non-bullies alike to see the impact of their words on their victims, causing them think twice before insulting or teasing their co-workers.

Source: http://behavioral-management.com/3-great-anti-bullying-activities
Types of Bullying in the Workplace

Unfortunately, many victims of bullying must live with the scars of bullying for the rest of their lives. This activity deals with helping victims to move on and to create a positive self-image after being bullied.

The Name Game Activity

1. Write down on a sheet a paper names that you have been called that hurt your feelings when you were younger or more recently.
2. Crumble up these sheets of paper and throw them away.
3. Write down what names you like being called, or want to be called, on a new piece of paper.

When you crumbled up the sheet of paper, it symbolized how you no longer associate with those names as part of your identity. When you wrote down the names you enjoy being called, it caused you create a new positive identity and respect for yourself.

Source: http://behavioral-management.com/3-great-anti-bullying-activities
References

   <http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Topics/Bullying_at_Work/>.

"Bullying: What Is It? Types of Bullying, Bullying Tactics, How Targets Are Selected, The

activities>.

"Contexts of Workplace Bullying." Bully 4u Is an Anti Bullying Service. Web. 11 Apr. 2012.
   <http://www.bully4u.ie/types-of-workplace-bullying/contexts-of-workplace
bullying.197.html>.


Wilson, Latricia. "Bullying At Work." Bullying at Work: Analysis of Workplace Bullying.
at-work.html>.
Psychological Triggers

Failure to Achieve Goals

A way that workplace bullies attempt to control their victims is by setting them up for failure. They do this by providing their victim with a situation that appears to give them a fair chance to succeed, but in reality they are set up to fail and are given almost no chance to succeed by their tormentor. This can threaten job security if the bully is in a position of power and no action is taken to prevent this scenario.

Another issue with being set up to fail is the feelings that one gets when they are associated with failure. This may seem ridiculous because it is out of the victim’s control; however, when someone is consistently being put in these situations they begin to believe they are failures.

The feelings we encounter whenever we fail, such as frustration, cause us to give up on doing the task at hand and can even lead to feelings of worthlessness in our personal lives. Everything that we do can feel bleak and unworthy whenever we are set up to feel like failures.

The following are some of the feelings associated with failure:

- Depression
- Despondency
- Lack of Belief in oneself

Ambitions and Feelings Thwarted

When a bully attempts to destroy your ambitions and feelings it causes something called “learned helplessness” to overcome a person. When a bully tells his or her victim that what they are doing is terrible, or awful, it eventually becomes a learned habit and the feeling that there is nothing you can do to help comes over an individual.

Later on, when there is a tough task at work, a victim of workplace bullying may feel that they are not capable of completing a task even though they are capable of completing it. This is because they are bullied into to believing that they can’t.
Learned helplessness can destroy how someone feels about themselves and can intensify issues that an individual may already have.

**Some of these may include:**

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Phobias
- Shyness
- Loneliness

Helplessness makes you feel as if you have no one and nothing to turn to by making you believe that you do not have the confidence, intellect, talents, and abilities to handle issues at home or anywhere else.

**Source:** [http://www.livestrong.com/article/14707-overcoming-helplessness/#ixzz1rRdJwcmN](http://www.livestrong.com/article/14707-overcoming-helplessness/#ixzz1rRdJwcmN)

**Feeling Threatened Mentally and Physically**

**Mentally**

More often than not, victims blame themselves and doubt their own self-worth. They feel shame and guilt and replay incidents over and over in their minds, wondering if they could have done anything differently. The feelings you have are the same whenever you feel threatened physically and mentally. This means that one is not better or worse than the other.

There is a lack of knowledge and a lack of research in understanding the psychological effects of workplace bullying; however, what is known about what happens to people who are bullied at work is concerning.

**In many cases the pain of being bullied at works causes the victim following feelings:**

- Incapable of doing daily tasks
- Befuddlement
- Confusion
- Abandoned by others
- Paralyzed with fear
A major issue with workplace bullying is the lack of understanding of what happens to the bully at work. Although a person may be a grown adult in the workplace they can still be hurt, much like children, by someone who is bullying them at work.

Source: http://www.worktrauma.org/change/bullying.htm

**Video**

The following video plays out a scenario where relentless workplace bullying destroys a person’s will and leads them to attempt suicide. As the video is watched make sure that you ask yourself some of the following questions:

- What is the victim’s state of mind?
- How does she feel?
- What steps could have been done to prevent this outcome?

Video Link: Bully Scenario

**Physical and Mental State**

**Mental State**

Issues such as low self-esteem and social anxiety can result from being bullied at work. Another issue that can result from bullying is anger. The issue with anger is it can lead to a physical retaliation on the victim’s part and this can lead to a disciplinary action from the employer.

The most troubling mental issue from workplace bullying is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is the result of traumatic events. In these events, there is very little control that can be exerted to help the individual. The result of these traumatic events is the loss of security a person would normally have over themselves.

PTSD, known for being a combat illness, is something that anyone can become inflicted with if their ability to cope is overwhelmed by traumatic events. Events such as child abuse, domestic abuse, and workplace bullying can trigger these types of feelings. When someone at an office or other workplace is inflicted with PTSD it feels like a warzone to them. These are wounds and what can result from these wounds are diseases, such as depression. For someone who is already battling depression, this can be very difficult for them to cope.
The following are some of the feelings associated with PTSD:

- Re-experiencing the event that caused the PTSD
- Avoiding activities that remind you of the trauma
- Loss of interest in life in general
- Feeling detached from others
- Believing that your future is limited (No career, no marriage, etc.)
- Lack of sleep
- Irritability
- Constant alertness

All of these symptoms make it almost impossible for one to function as an adult. Without help, these symptoms can lead to someone taking their own life.

Source:

Physical State

In the workplace, you rarely have bullying that involves bodily injury such as scrapes and bruises; however, there is a physical toll that the victim takes. The main culprit is stress. The most worrisome thing about stress is how easily it can go unnoticed to the individual. It is something that a victim can get used to and it goes ignored. What this leads to is an overload of stress. This overload of stress can lead to serious medical injuries. Frequent stress can harm all parts of your body.

The following health issues related to stress:

- Stroke
- Heart Attack
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Sweating
- Rapid Heartbeat
- Heavy Breathing
- Higher Blood Pressure
- Crying
Substance Abuse
The stresses of constant workplace bullying can lead to substance abuse. Substance abuse gives you the feeling that you have to have drugs to get through day of work, so it becomes an addiction.

Substance abuse may include habitual marijuana use, alcohol abuse, weekend binges, use of opiates, or abuse of prescription drugs, such as, Percocet and oxycodone. Basically, any drug is capable of inhibiting physical and mental functions. These issues can severely damage your work, social life, and most importantly your family life.

The following from the American Council for Drug Education compares data between employees who are substance abusers and employees who are non-substance abusers:

- Ten times more likely to miss work
- 3.6 times more likely to be involved in on-the-job accidents (and 5 times more likely to injure themselves or another in the process)
- Five times more likely to file a worker’s compensation claim
- 33% less productive

Another thing that results from substance abuse is delayed reaction and slower judgment. In certain industries this can put other employees in danger. Substance abusers are five times more likely than other workers to cause injuries and they are accountable for 40 percent of all industrial fatalities.

In a professional setting, substance abuse can do the following:

- Increase the workloads of others,
- Lower productivity,
- Compromise product quality,
- Tarnish a company’s image
- Reduce competitiveness and profitability,
- Weakening the companies that employ them and threatening everyone’s job security.

Finally, whenever you become dependent on drugs and alcohol it changes you from the person that you were before you became and addict. This can isolate you from your friends and family, which makes it more difficult to recover from addiction.

Here are some of the changes that are associated with substance abuse:
- Mood Swings
- Lying
- Isolation
- Secrecy
- Manipulation
- Stealing

Psychological Triggers

In November 2010, a WBI instant poll with 1069 respondents asked questions about being bullied at work. It should be noted that 98% described themselves as targets of workplace bullying. When they were asked if any personal shame or stigma was attached to being bullied at work the results were as follows:

What does this survey tell us?

It tells us that many of the people who are being bullied are not educated on workplace bullying. When people aren’t educated on a topic, they lack the power to combat issues, which in this case is workplace bullying.

What needs to be done?

Give victims the tools to combat workplace bullying. This means that they need as much knowledge on workplace bullying as possible. They also need people at their workplace to make these issues known.
Psychological Triggers

The following activity will help give you and your group members an idea of what it feels like whenever we called things that are hurtful.
This activity will require a piece of paper, a pencil, and for the members of the class to get into groups of 2-4.

**Wrinkled Wanda Activity**

1. On a piece of paper, have the participants trace an outline of a full body person.

2. Once the outline has been traced, the participants will write unkind, rude, and disrespectful statements all over the outline. These are statements that could be made to another person like, “You’re a loser, nobody likes you, you are dumb.”

3. Identify the drawing as a male or a female. After he/she is completely filled with a variety of negative comments, have the participants crumple the drawing.

4. Then un-crumple it and show your picture to the group members.

5. The negative comments and the crumpled paper illustrate how someone feels whenever they are bullied and told hurtful things by others.

6. Have each group discuss how this activity has helped their understanding of what bullying can do to a person.

Whenever the groups discuss the do the activity and discuss the activity have them ask themselves some of these questions:

1. Could these crumples represent the rigidness we feel inside when someone is being bullied?
2. Does it remind them of how they felt, if applicable, when they’ve been bullied?
3. What can be done to prevent people from saying hurtful things, such as what was said in the wrinkled Wanda activity?
References


“Suicide Not to City of Toronto Workplace Bullying” YouTube.com. dantesevie, 3 February 2012. Web. 4 April 2012

Underlying Variables

Changes in Organization

When changes occur within an organization, it can leave employees and managers stressed and angry. It is rare that any of the people affected consider the consequences of those feelings. Often times, it is the anger and stress from changes in organization that causes workplace bullying.

What circumstances or events are considered to be changes in organization, and how can they be reduced? This section covers situations that stem from changes in organization, and effective ways to prevent them.

There is favoritism of one employee over another.

This situation occurs in all workplaces. Nearly every worker has witnessed another employee receiving favoritism. On The Human Equation website, Dr. Scott Pustizzi defines workplace favoritism, stating “While favoritism can be a complicated subject, it basically amounts to a supervisor or manager favoring a particular employee or group, thereby leaving excluded employees at an unfair disadvantage.”

Dr. Pustizzi also recommends that anyone questioning favoritism in the workplace should ask themselves the following questions:

- Does an employee have to be on a “fast track” program in order to be promoted?
- Have some employees been defined as non-promotable, regardless of future job performance?
- Are employees in the employee development program given more interesting assignments, even though others may be more qualified to assume these new responsibilities?

(Pustizzi)

When organizational changes occur in the workplace, such as a change in management, many of the questions list above become true. The more changes there are in management and organization, the more likely employees are to be treated with less care. For example, employees that stand out to one manager may not stand out as much to a new manager. Because every individual has different points of view, it is crucial that management stay unbiased regarding their employees. Therefore it is important that when changes in organization occur, that all types of favoritism are considered.
Types of Favoritism

Nepotism

Many workers have experienced this scenario. An employee recommends their brother to the manager, and the manager hires him. The manager assumes that since the original employee is a hard worker that his brother must be as well. Despite the stack of resumes on her desk, the manager hires her employee’s brother.

Anytime that an employee is hired, simply based on kinship, it is considered cronyism (Anderson). Nepotism is one of the most common forms of favoritism in the workplace. Unfortunately, that also means that it creates a lot of anger in the workplace. What happens when the new hire is not a mirrored image of the family member that worked their first? Employees and managers become angry and hostile towards that employee. This behavior paves the way for workplace bullying. The release of anger is often associated with harsh verbal comments to the newly hired employee. When in reality, it is not the employee’s fault.

Cronyism

Cronyism is the same thing as nepotism; however, cronyism is strictly “the act of hiring friends regardless of qualifications” (Anderson). While the events play out similarly to nepotism, the family member that gets hired often feels like they are entitled to better pay and benefits than others. For example, if an executive hired their sister as a secretary, the secretary would likely feel as though she deserved higher pay since she is related to the executive. It is also likely that the executive would pay her more and assume that other employees will not find out. However, this is not the case. When other employees discover her attitude, or learn about her higher salary, they will become even more hostile and angry towards that employee.

Patronage

Patronage occurs when a manager promotes an employee because they want them to hire their family members or friends (Anderson). This method serves as a way for the manager to appear unbiased. However, the manager still has the intention of hiring target people. This type of favoritism is the most difficult to spot in the workplace. Although it can be difficult to prevent, the same precautions can be taken that are with cronyism and nepotism.

Prevention

These types of bullying can be prevented by taking the right precautions to avoid those situations. Managers should always conduct interviews before hiring all employees. They should also consider more than one candidate. After all, a more knowledgeable employee could be a phone call away. They should remain unbiased in any situation, and recognize that the people they know are not always well suited for the position. When an employee recognizes favoritism in the workplace, they should notify human resources or contact the department of labor for a formal complaint.
There is lack of flexibility on part of owner or manager.

Imagine if a new company took over at your workplace; therefore, you now have new managers and staff, as well as new policies. Now imagine that something has come up and you need to work different hours, but your new manager will not approve it.

Would that make you feel angry or hostile towards them and other employees?

Many problems can arise when owners or managers become less flexible. Whether it is a lack of flexibility concerning work schedules, or a lack of flexibility with assignments, it can be frustrating. This frustration often leads to bullying in the workplace. Fortunately, it can also be avoided.

**Prevention**

Communicate with your manager. It is not uncommon for the manager to be unaware of his lack of flexibility. What he considers logical, you may consider less flexible. Simply taking the time to discuss the issue at hand can save you a lot of stress and anger. This decrease in anger reduces the risk of bullying in the workplace. If a discussion does not work, you may always file a complaint with human resources or your manager’s superior. It is important to remember that there is always someone above your superior. Whether it is the owner or the Department of Labor, there is always someone to call for advice or action.

**Employees have had inadequate training.**

You enter the workplace and there are new employees that have not been adequately trained. This situation can be difficult for all parties. Not only does it put you at risk for stress and anger, but also puts the new hire at risk. As previously discussed, anger can cause people to behave poorly, increasing the risk of bullying in the workplace. You may not be able to prevent this situation from happening. After all, organizational changes lead to new employees and training. However, you can take some steps to improve the situation and to let go of any anger towards those employees.

**Prevention**

Teach. By teaching the new employees what you know, or how to do their job, it can increase the time it takes for them to be trained properly. If you know that you will be working closely with a new employee that has had inadequate training, teaching them is the most logical solution. You may also discuss the issue with management; however, it may be best to train someone you will be working with anyway. This ensures that the employee understands what is expected of them and that they conduct their work in a manner that compliments yours. The employee will likely appreciate your help, and feel less angry about the situation as well. It is important to remember that it is not the employee’s fault that she is being trained poorly. Therefore, the employee should not be bullied or blamed.
Understaffing

When workplace bullying occurs, employees do one of two things. They put up with the bullying in hopes of it being eliminated, or they quit their position. As writer and researcher Wendy Webb states, “The costs of temporary employees to cover understaffing are significantly higher than simply paying a regular employee” (Webb). However, the cost does not stop there. The stress that understaffing can cause other employees directly affects the risk of workplace bullying. If one employee has to make up for the absence of bullied co-workers, then that employee will become stressed and will likely take their anger out by bullying others. This situation creates a vicious cycle that has no positive end. However, if this situation can be eliminated, then workplace bullying can decrease.

Prevention

Understaffing can be prevented by encouraging the bullied employees to stay. By sticking up for them when they are being bullied, and notifying others that bullying exists in the workplace, action can be taken to cease the bullying. Otherwise, if employees do not take action, bullying will continue and remain unnoticed, leaving the bullied employee to fend for himself, and more likely to resign.
Underlying Variables

Workplace bullying can be a stressful and frustrating situation for the bully, the person being bullied, and the co-workers watching it all happen. One of the best solutions to end workplace bullying relies on those looking in from the outside. Some co-workers may not understand why they should do something. This activity shows that strength in numbers can often be useful, even in workplace bullying circumstances.

The Swarm Activity

1. Divide the class up into four groups.
2. Designate one group to represent the bullies, one group to represent the victims, and two groups that represent co-workers.
3. Tell the victim and co-workers to stand together in one large group.
4. Tell the bully group to stand together, facing the victims and co-workers.

The class should now have the understanding that victims and the co-workers are more populated than the bullies themselves. Before the co-workers joined forces with the victims, the victims were relatively even with the bullies. However, after the co-workers joined forces with the victims, they outnumbered the bullies.

This activity serves to show co-workers that they can do something other than just watching workplace bullying happen. They can stand up for the workers being bullied. Much like a swarm of bees can overwhelm individuals, a group of co-workers can also overwhelm a bully. It is likely that if this situation occurred in the workplace, even with smaller numbers, that the bully would walk away and leave the victim alone.

Underlying Variables

Stress

Stress is one of the leading causes for workplace bullying. Perhaps this is because many workplaces have high stress factors. Some people have trouble letting go of hot air, or stress. Let’s test this observation.

Letting Go of Hot Air Activity

1. Choose a balloon from the basket.
2. Blow up the balloon and hold it your hand. Do not tie the balloon.
3. Find one person in the room that has the same color balloon that you do.
4. Think of one thing you could do to be less stressed at work.
5. Count to three and let go of the balloon.

Odds are that your balloon did not deflate at the same exact pace as your partners. This balloon activity represents the way we let go of stress in the workplace. Some people relieve stress faster than others. What was the stress reliever you thought of before you released your balloon?

Try these stress relievers during your next workday:

*Deep breathing: Close your eyes and take a slow, deep breath. Breathe out. Repeat 5 times.

*Buy a stress ball: Spend 5 minutes of your lunch break concentrating and squeezing the ball. For each squeeze, think of one positive thought (family, reading, etc.).

*Go for a walk: Walks are proven to help relieve stress. Try taking one with a co-worker on your break. You will feel less stressed and you will improve your fitness.

The Buddy System

Reducing stress in the workplace

Develop a buddy system for the workplace.

This will allow new workers to feel welcome. It also allows co-workers to stick up for one another. The more people know about each other, the harder it is to bully them. Imagine if everyone at your workplace had at least one buddy that would stick up for them or speak of them in a positive manner.

Do you think bullying would succeed?

How do you think it would make the bully feel?

If someone bullied your buddy, would you be more likely to file a complaint than you would if you did not know them?

Discuss some answers with the class.
References


http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/small/Sm-Z/Workplace-Anger.html#b


Other Causes for Bullying

**Personality**

Two types of bullies exist in this world, physical and emotional. Physical bullies are thought to be physically intimidating and threatening males, but in reality the physical bully takes on the form of both genders. Emotional bullies are people that were bullied by someone when they were younger. Therefore, they take out their anger on peers that appear smaller and weaker than others. This type of bullying is most commonly associated with Borderline Personality Disorder, or BPD.

**Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)**

People are susceptible to BPD in any field of work. It is a condition learned and carried over from a younger age. At work, one may notice an individual in management who goes on “power trips” and abuses his employees. These actions can be related back to their past and how they were treated growing up. However, just because they had a rough past does not make it right for them to take out anger on fellow employees. In most cases, when someone tries to diffuse the situation the individual with BPD will perceive it as offensive and escalate the situation.

Some cases of BPD are so severe that the person becomes incapable of forming healthy attachments with others and their relationships are characterized by constant conflict and frustration. When working with such individuals, it is important to remember to not let their words and actions get the best of you. If you encounter a fellow employee or manager that fits the criteria for someone with BPD, it is important that you take action. If you cannot discuss the problem with the worker, the human resource department should be contacted.

**Narcissistic Personality Disorder**

Another cause for bullying lies within Narcissistic Personality Disorder. People with narcissistic personality disorder “overestimate their abilities and inflate their accomplishments, often appearing boastful and pretentious, whilst correspondingly underestimating and devaluing the achievements and accomplishments of others” (Narcissistic). People with NPD often have difficulty recognizing the needs of others. They are often dismissive, oblivious to the hurtfulness of their behaviors or remarks, and quick to blame or criticize others when their expectations are not met.
Signs that indicate someone might have NPD are:

- A grandiose sense of self-importance
- Takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends
- Is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her
- Shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes

**Social Learning Theory**

Social learning theory focuses on the learning that occurs in a social context. Individuals can learn from observation, imitation, and modeling. All three of these factors are serious have the potential to create new bullies in the workplace. As humans, we often learn by observing others around ourselves, and tend to imitate those who are successful. Sadly reinforcement of bad behavior and punishment of good behavior leads to the creation of more bullies in the workplace. In today’s declining job market employees struggle and fight in order to keep their job. Many employees are reinforced by modeling.

**Modeling**

Modeling occurs when one employee sees another get promoted within the company for their outstanding sales goals. This exemplary employee achieved this goal not through hard work, but rather taking advantage of their fellow employees to increase their standings within the company. Other employees observe the benefits these actions yielded and follow in their footsteps. I have personally witnessed this unfortunate event unfold a few times at my current employer; one of the district managers forced all of his workload onto his subordinates with threats of possibly losing their jobs if they did not complete the work in time. All of the subordinates completed his work for him to submit to his boss where he received all of the credit and a promotion. Expectations of the employees drive their internal motive, whether it is good or bad.

**Imitation**

Although learning from imitation is closely related to modeling, the results of imitation are far less severe. When an individual is imitating someone, they are repeating the actions of others. Usually the leader of the group, such as a teacher in a classroom or the manager at an office will be the target of the imitation.

**Expectations**

Expectations are when people “expect certain behaviors to bring reinforcements and others to bring punishment” (Social Learning Theory). When an employee is positively reinforced for an action they take, they are more prone to repeat this behavior whether it is good or bad to increase their standings within the company, but only if they are aware of the connection to their actions. The reinforcement of improper behavior will further contribute to bullying within the workplace.
Casual Attribution Theory

Attribution Theory is concerned with “how individuals interpret and how this related to their thinking and behavior” (Attribution Theory). A three stage process underlines an attribution:

1. The person must perceive or observe the behavior
2. The person must believe the behavior was intentionally performed
3. The person must determine if they believe the other person was forced to perform the behavior

Weiner, a renowned expert on Attribution Theory, stated “causal attributions determine affective reactions to success and failure.” Casual Attribution Theory states we are unhappy with receiving praise when everyone receives the same recognition, we also don’t appreciate being condemned for actions that do not warrant that response.

Macho Culture in Organizations

Macho culture refers to the inability of women to achieve a high ranking executive position within a company. But what makes it so hard for a female to reach an executive position? The Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) claims corporations are creating a series of barriers that “filter out female talent at each stage of management hierarchy” (Kollewe). ILM conducted a survey of 800 men and women where three quarters of women and nearly half of the men blamed the attitudes of senior managers for the women’s inability to achieve a higher position. By organizations operating in such fashions they are losing out on competent workers throughout the hierarchy all the way to the board. In order to combat this problem, companies should focus achieving objectives and hire and maintain employees based on the basis of merit and not gender.

Poor Social Skills

When we hear about poor social skills we immediately jump to the conclusion of the quiet, shy kid that no one talks to and not the individual that is always the center of attention. In fact, both of these cases, the introverted and extroverted individuals, are both at risk of being bullied or being the bully. Dr. Pronk stated, “the scars of bullying can be long-lasting: People can take the hurt through into their adult life, their workplaces, and their romantic relationships."

Being able to identify and prevent poor social skills remains crucial in the battle to prevent bullying. Many individuals who came from a home, neighborhood, school, or workplace with higher levels of conflict are at a higher risk of bullying or being bullied.
Covering Up Their Own Inadequacies

Have you ever wondered why bullies have so many friends? It may not be because the individuals that surround the bully are truly their friends; rather they pose to be friends so they are able to escape the torment the bully may cause to them. Most bullies feel the need to connect with other individuals so the faux friendship presented by their peers is often overlooked. They often believe these relationships are genuine so the true reasoning behind these relations remains in the dark.

In a workplace environment we might expect to see an employee who does the bare minimum required by the company to stay employed. Wanting to make their personal image greater than what is truly is, they may resort to physical or verbal abuse towards other employees who have performed a better job. By degrading the quality or quantity of the work performed by other employees, they are trying to make the appearance their work is just as good, if not better, than everyone else. Sadly this type of behavior brings down the morale of other employees and creates a stressful work environment. When encountered by a bully that is trying to cover up their inadequate work by criticizing everyone else, they should be reported to the manager or human resources office. Eliminating these bullies will result in increased productivity from all of the employees and a higher morale.
Cooperative Comics Activity

Comic books are visual literature. This simple cooperative group activity allows employees to identify confrontational issues within their own workplace and then imagine solutions.

**Step One: Brainstorming**
As a group, brainstorm and list typical situations where employees might find themselves in conflict. These might be bullying, race, socio-economic or gender related. List these on the board. Divide participants into groups of five. Have each group select one of the topics, allowing them to choose the one they find most engaging.

**Step Two: Concept Mapping**
Each group must map out the concept they’ve chosen, listing ideas and incidents tied to the theme. Guide them in thinking about what causes confrontation, how it plays out, how it makes people feel, and what alternatives might happen to change the outcome.

**Step Three: Story Concept**
Explain that a story has parts: a beginning, middle and end. Their comic story will have five parts.

- Beginning
- A scene to advance the story
- Middle
- A scene to advance the story
- Ending

Have each group discuss how their story begins and ends. Then have them add a middle section. Finally, let them create the two scenes that will complete their comic.

**Step Four: Drawing**
Participants split up the five frames of the comic book with each of them doing one scene. Words and drawings must flow from one scene to another, so it is important that they discuss what is going on. Is it plausible? Can you see this really occurring? Is this how people in our workplace actually speak?

**Step Five: Presenting**
Each group can present their strips orally to the rest of the participants and also "publish" them by hanging them on the board in the front of the room.
References


<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/mar/12/women-management-ftse-100-firms>.
Useful Video Links

Bully Scenario: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOsKkwYRwnU