

Addressing Workplace Bullying

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Definition of Workplace Bullying:

**“An Emotional Assault that begins when an individual becomes the target of disrespectful and harmful communication and behavior in the workplace”
(Leymann, 1990)**

What is it?

- **Bullying is aggression against "anyone" as opposed to discrimination based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, creed, nationality, disability or pregnancy. (protected by the Civil Rights Act and the ADA).**

ALSO NOTE:

the emphasis on frequency and duration—

this is not the same as occasional pranks, jokes, or rude comments

What is the process?

- **May start with an incident of conflict that goes unresolved**
- **Actions escalate into abusive and terrorizing behavior and the target feels increasingly helpless**
- **Individual distress, illness and social misery increase**
- **Productivity is affected and targets start to use sick leave to try to recover from daily torment**
- **Resignation, termination or early retirement likely**
- **For the target, death--through illness or suicide--may be the final chapter**

Key Features:

- Occurring in a continual, multiple and systematic fashion over time
- Portraying the target as being at fault
- Engineered to discredit, confuse, intimidate, isolate and force the person into submission
- If the target leaves, he/she is usually represented as having left by choice

finally.....

**Ignored, misrepresented, tolerated,
unrecognized, encouraged or even
instigated by administrators and
management.**

HEINZ LEYMANNN'S TYPOLOGY

**Five Categories of Bullying Behavior
(from Leymann, 1993).**

Not all will happen in each case)

1st Category: *Impacts Self Expression and the Way Communications Happen.*

Includes: One's ability to express oneself, being constantly interrupted, scolded/yelled at publicly, constant criticism, terrorized on phone, oral threats, written threats, contact denied through innuendoes of gestures or "looks"

2nd Category: *Attacks one's social relations, INCLUDING:*

People do not speak to the target, target cannot speak to anyone, access is denied, target is put into a workspace that is isolated from others (E.G., THE BASEMENT OF THE WEST WING ON WEST WING), colleagues are forbidden to talk to target, target treated as though invisible

3rd Category: *Attacks on one's reputation*

Includes: Negative gossip, unfounded rumors circulated, being ridiculed, being treated as if mentally ill, being forced to undergo a psychiatric evaluation, a handicap is ridiculed, people imitate (mock) speech/gestures/ walk, political or religious beliefs ridiculed, private life ridiculed, nationality ridiculed, (cont.)

3rd Category, cont.

..forced to do work that affects one's self esteem, efforts are judged in a wrong and demeaning way, one's decisions are always criticized, demeaning name calling, sexual innuendoes

4th Category: *Attacks on the quality of one's professional and life situation.*

- **No specific tasks assigned, or supervisors take away assignments,**
- **target given meaningless jobs to carry out or tasks below qualifications with the goal being to discredit the target,**

4th Category, cont.

- **Continuously given new tasks or tasks that demean self esteem,**
- **General damage that creates actual financial costs to target, damage to home or workstation**

5th Category

Direct attacks on a person's health.

Includes: Being forced to do a physically strenuous job, threats of physical violence, light violence used as threat, physical abuse, outright sexual harassment

Is it Legal???

- In USA all the 3RD AND 5TH categories are illegal and covered by law in all 50 states.
- Most of the 1st, 2nd, and 4th categories fall into behaviors considered to be "*employers' prerogative*".

Stages of targets' Responses

(vary in intensity and duration)

Stage One:

The person manages to resist, escapes at an early stage, or is fully rehabilitated in the same workplace or somewhere else. (this is a very good outcome)

Stage Two Response:

If the person *cannot resist or immediately escape*. Suffers temporary or prolonged mental and/ or physical disability and has difficulty re-entering the workforce (may be chronically unemployed, depressed, anxious).

If the person returns to work, this is considered a “somewhat good” outcome

Stage Three:

The person becomes disabled and is unable to reenter the workforce.

Physical and /or mental rehabilitation will be unlikely, unless a specialized treatment protocol is applied.

How Common is Bullying?

Like family violence/Intimate Partner Violence: it's difficult to get clear numbers)

Why:

- Underreported
- Shame and/or embarrassment
- May be legally prohibited by contract or settlement agreement

Estimates:

20% LIFETIME PREVALENCE (ONE IN FIVE WORKERS WILL BE TARGET OF WORKPLACE BULLYING OVER LIFESPAN. (Namie, 2003)

4% INCIDENCE (AT ANY MOMENT IN TIME, 4% OF THE POPULATION IS BEING BULLIED AT WORK). (Leymann, 1993).

Bureau of Labor Statistics United States Workforce October, 2016:

159,712,000 Labor Force

151,925,000 Employed

7,787,000 Unemployed (4.9%)

So...

4% or 6,077,000 WORKERS IN
THE UNITED STATES ARE
BEING BULLIED AT ANY ONE
POINT IN TIME!

(SIX MILLION U.S. WORKERS)

And...

**As many as 30,000,000 will experience
being the target of bullying over the
course of their work lives!**

Bureau Labor Statistics (October, 2016) In Oregon

Workforce: 2,082,300

Employed: 1,971,300

Unemployed: 111,000 (5.3%)

Non-farm: 1,855,100 workers

Health and Education: 273,700

Government: 312,800

Rate:

➤ 4% of Oregon's Employed Workforce=

78,852 employees are being bullied

20% (lifetime prevalence)=

394,260 Oregon workers will be bullied
over their work histories

Hard to Gather Data. Why?

- Under reported
- Fear
- Not recognized
- Sanctions against telling/fear of retaliation
- Like gathering data on family violence, targets don't always take action that gets attention
- Data can be descriptive only, not able to establish clear causal relationships

Best Current Sources

Workplace Bullying Institute
Gary Namie

Annual Studies

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS of WBI 2014

**1000 respondents who
visited the website and
participated in an
online survey (non-
probability, self
selected sample)**

- **20% had been bullied in the past**
- **7% were presently being bullied**
- **21% had witnessed bullying of a coworkers or colleague**

so: almost 1/2 some bullying exposure

- **23% were “aware” of bullying but had no experience**
- **28% were “unaware” and reported having no experience with bullying**

Based on the 2014 WBI study:

- **Most bullies are men**
- **They seem to prefer targeting women**
- **Women prefer to target women**
- **Rarest: men bullied by women**

Bullying and Job Loss

- **Targets are more likely than the perpetrator to lose the job.**
- **Women as perpetrators suffer the highest rate of job loss**

2014 Outcomes Data

- **29% of targets voluntarily left job**
- **19% were forced to quit when conditions worsened**
- **13% terminated by employer**

So,

61% of targets
lost/left their jobs

- **13% target transferred to another location with the same employer**

But....

- **11% perpetrator punished but kept job**
- **10% perpetrator was terminated**
- **5% perpetrator quit voluntarily**

(Namie, 2014)

And...

Only

26% of perpetrators
had consequences
and only 15% lost
or left jobs!

So....

**... consequences seem to
continue to favor the
perpetrator over the target!**

Tell Tale Signs: (Yamada,2008)

- **Increase in attrition and/or absenteeism**
- **Decrease in productivity and quality of work**
- **Sudden reduction or allegations of reduction in performance by an otherwise consistently satisfactory performance record**
- **Employee morale decline after downsizing, mergers, reorganizing**
- **Increase in interpersonal aggression**

Tough Calls (Yamada, 2008)

Abusive managers, administrators, directors, executives, or teams may:

- 1. Attract good business**
- 2. Be well liked by peers**
- 3. Have mastered the art of “kiss up, kick down”**

Can bullies be “reformed”?

- **Some can benefit from coaching and counseling**
- **Often, however, changes are temporary**

Direct and Indirect Costs to Organizations for Unchecked Bullying

Economic Consequences for Organizations

- **Paying wages for a worker who no longer has any tasks/functions**
- **Extensive use of sick leave**
- **High unemployment claims**
- **Targets may be coerced to resign, or**
- **Accept early retirement**

Costs, cont.

- **Low quality work**
- **High absenteeism**
- **Damage to public image**
- **Psycho-social problems of targets creates health care costs for everyone! (shift to public sector health care costs)**

Costs, cont.

- **Disability claims/disability retirement claims**
- **Worker compensation claims**
- **Legal expenses for wrongful dismissal lawsuits**
- **Overtime wages to fill behind lost employees**

Costs, cont.

- **Drops in production rates for the organization's functions (drops in service rates)**
- **Costs of Human Resources interventions**
- **Consulting fees/training fees for remedies**

Costs, cont.

- **Recruitment of staff**
- **Hiring staff**
- **Training staff**
- **Retaining staff**

(estimates: 1/3 to 2/3 of the annual salary of the staff being replaced)

Costs, cont.

- **Costs that are passed along to consumers/clients/customers**
- **Targets' ability to participate in the marketplace get reduced (loss of spending power)**
- **Target may become a public sector liability**

Individual Consequences

- **Motivation**
- **Task learning**
- **Team interdependence**
- **Pro-social behavior (going the extra mile for the job) is diminished**

Data are mixed, but because many studies have been conducted in these arenas, we have much information about these domains?

- **Health Care (medicine and nursing)**
- **Education, especially higher education**
- **Public Services**

Where?

- **Organizations that employ people whose personalities allow them to be “vulnerable” (i.e., more emotionally open—healthcare, education, social service organizations)!**
- **Bad management**
- **Stress-intensive workplaces**
- **High levels of “boredom” (repetitive work)**

Where?

- **Disbelief of Managers**
- **Organizations involved in unethical activities (film “Training Day”)**
- **Down-sizing, budget cuts, reorganizations, mergers**

Organizational Interventions and Strategies: WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

- **Mission Statement (Vision and Values)** that includes the organization's objectives and how employees are treated
- **Organizational Structure (clear reporting levels)**
- **Job Descriptions (& duty statements)**

PREVENTION STRATEGIES, CONT.

Personnel Policies that are

1. **Comprehensive**
1. **Consistent**
2. **Legal**
3. **Simple**

Worker Climate Factors that can help to prevent

- **Worker Involvement**
- **Goal Alignment**
- **Creativity and improvement**
- **Information and communication**
- **Supervisory trust and supportiveness**
- **Development**
- **Respect and fairness**
- **Structures and work tasks**

PREVENTION STRATEGIES, cont.

- Hire employees with good skills and good emotional intelligence (EI)
- Ensure that employees “buy into” goals and objectives of the organization and that they understand their role in achieving them
- Disciplinary Issues—deal fairly, consistently and expeditiously

PREVENTION STRATEGIES, cont.

- Provide *training and staff development* to meet organizational needs.
- Communicate in an open, timely and honest manner
- Create opportunities for teamwork, creativity, decision making, trust and empowerment
- Have methods for conflict resolution at hand

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