



Bullying in the Workplace

Workplace – COVID-19 Training Series

Introduction

Bullying is called the silent epidemic. Although half of workers have experienced or witnessed bullying, policies and laws dealing with it are far less prevalent.

This is, in part, because bullying can be hard to identify and address. People wonder, what does bullying look like? How can we discourage it in our workplace? What can I do to protect my staff and co-workers?

All of these questions (and more!) will be answered in this training.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this workshop, you will be able to:

- Define what bullying is and is not
- Understand the costs of bullying to people and organizations
- Identify bullying behaviors and the reasons behind them
- Know some ways to prevent bullying and understand what role you can play
- Know some ways to protect yourself from bullying
- Know what to do if you are bullied
- Identify appropriate solutions for a bullying incident (within and outside the organization)
- Assist in creating an anti-bullying policy

Session One: Defining Bullying

What is Bullying?

Let's make sure that we're all on the same page when it comes to talking about bullying.

American bullying experts Drs. Gary and Ruth Namie give us this definition: "Bullying at work is repeated, health-harming mistreatment of a person by one or more workers that takes the form of **verbal abuse**; conduct or behaviors that are **threatening, intimidating, or humiliating**; **sabotage** that prevents work from getting done; or some combination of the three."

(Source: Page 3, The Bully at Work – Second Edition, Namie and Namie, 2009. Emphasis added is our own.)

The key characteristics of bullying are:

- It is done to control and/or destroy another person, often with the intent of forcing them out of the company
- It assaults their dignity, trustworthiness, competence, and self-worth
- It makes the target feel responsible and guilty
- It isolates and confuses the target
- It is usually long-lasting, repeated, and escalates in severity

Bullying is also referred to as:

- Psychological violence
- Verbal harassment
- Personal harassment
- Emotional abuse

☑ Think Points

Take time to think about these key characteristics – would you or have you ever experienced this on the job?

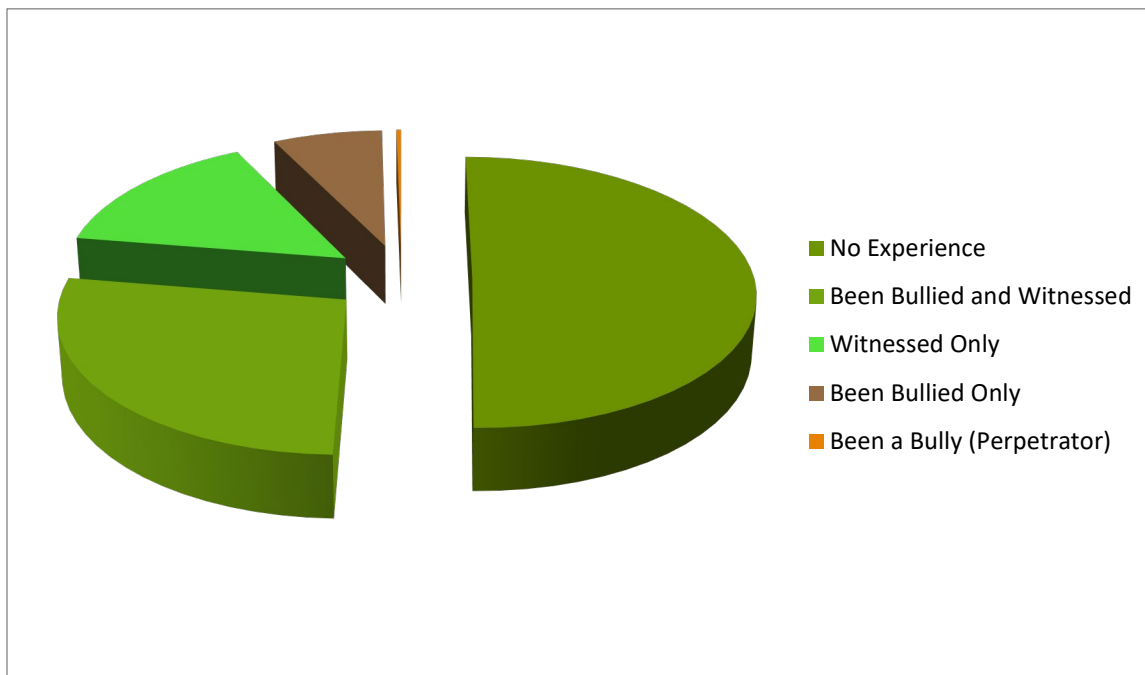
Some Scary Statistics

Drs. Gary and Ruth Namie, whom we cited just a moment ago, have also founded the Workplace Bullying Institute (<http://www.workplacebullying.org>). Although it is American-based, they offer a fantastic network of resources on workplace bullying that can be used by people around the world.

In 2010, the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI for short) released a survey that shared some scary statistics about workplace bullying in the United States. It is believed that these results can be extrapolated to other regions.

Bullying is a Common Experience

The survey shows that half of Americans have experienced bullying personally or witnessed it. This is almost identical to the results from WBI's 2007 survey.



Common Targets

Gender, race, and age all play a part in who might become a bully's target. According to WBI's 2010 survey:

- **62% of bullies are men; 38% are women.** However, women target other women 80% of the time, while men target both genders.
- This means that **58% of targets are women while 42% are men.**

- 40% of **Hispanics** have been bullied, along with 39% of **African-Americans** and 34% of **Caucasians**. Interestingly, only 14% of **Asians** report being bullied.
- 50% of bullying happens to people **aged 30-49**. The remainder is split almost evenly between ages 18-29 and ages 50-64.
- **Level of education** seems to make no difference.

The 2007 WBI survey showed that:

- Bullying is four times more prevalent than other types of harassment
- 81% of bullying is done by supervisors

Think Points

Discuss these statistics with participants. Does it reflect their experiences?

The Costs of Bullying

Individual

The impact on a bullying target's emotional and physical health can be devastating. Bullying can cause:

- Profound negative feelings, such as anxiety, guilt, shame, confusion, fear, paranoia, lack of self-worth, and grief
- Stress
- Loss of concentration
- Sleep disturbances (too much or too little, nightmares, early waking)
- Headaches
- Depression and other mental illnesses
- Gastro-intestinal issues
- Flare-ups of existing conditions
- Increased blood pressure and heart rate
- Obsessive behavior
- Social withdrawal and self-isolation
- Lack of interest in life
- Substance abuse
- Suicidal thoughts, gestures, attempts (and in some cases, suicide is completed)
- Increased anger, leading to outbursts and violence

Stress-Related Health Impairment

How Bullying Can Affect Your Brain and Body - Physical Harm

Stressors, aspects of the work environment and the behavior of people working there, can generate stress. Bullies are stressors, but so are coworkers who do nothing when you expect them to help. In addition, do-nothing institutional helpers -- HR and senior management -- exacerbate problems.

Stress is the biological human response to stressors. It is physiological and real, not just imagined. Low-level stress may be necessary to compel people to act. However, severe stress, which prevents rational, controlled action, has overwhelmingly negative consequences.

Distress, not eustress, is the harmful variety of stress. Distress triggers the human stress response, which is an automatically coordinated release of glucocorticoids, cortisol being the most prominent hormone, that floods the brain and body. Prolonged exposure of brain tissue glucocorticoids leads to atrophy of areas responsible for memory, emotional regulation and an ability to sustain positive social relationships.

Stress-related diseases and health complications from prolonged exposure to the stressors of bullying:

- Cardiovascular Problems: Hypertension (60%) to Strokes, Heart Attacks
- Adverse Neurological Changes: Neurotransmitter Disruption, Hippocampus and Amygdala atrophy
- Gastrointestinal: IBD, colitis
- Immunological Impairment: More frequent infections of greater severity
- Auto-immune disorders
- Fibromyalgia (21%), Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (33%)
- Diabetes (10%)
- Skin Disorders (17%)

Some physical indications of the above stress might include:

- Nausea
- Tremors of the Lips, Hands, Etc.
- Feeling Uncoordinated
- Chills
- Profuse Sweating
- Diarrhea
- Rapid Heartbeat
- Rapid Breathing
- Elevated Blood Pressure
- Chest Pain
- Uncontrollable Crying
- Headaches

Each of the symptoms can start small and may seem unrelated, but the presence of such indicators should be heeded as a warning.

Mental Health Harm

Psychological-Emotional-Mental Injuries

Bullying is often called psychological harassment or violence. What makes it psychological is bullying's impact on the person's mental health and sense of well-being. The personalized, focused nature of the assault destabilizes and disassembles the target's identity, ego strength, and ability to rebound from the assaults. The longer the exposure to stressors like bullying, the more severe the psychological impact. When stress goes unabated, it compromises both a target's physical and mental health.

Psychological-Emotional Injuries

- Debilitating Anxiety (80%)
- Panic Attacks (52%)
- Clinical Depression: new to person or exacerbated condition previously controlled (49%)
- Post-traumatic Stress (PTSD) from deliberate human-inflicted abuse (30%)
- Shame (the desired result of humiliating tactics by the bully) - sense of deserving a bad fate
- Guilt (for having "allowed" the bully to control you)
- Overwhelming sense of Injustice (Equity - the unfairness of targeting you who works so hard; Procedural - the inadequacy of the employer's response to your complaint)

PTSD is the result of environments that traumatize, in those working conditions there is little predictability or control. This can create an intensive or overwhelming threat to a person which often results in the destruction of his or her sense of security.

PTSD, best known as a war wound, is actually possible for anyone whose coping mechanisms have been overwhelmed. It happens in childhood abuse cases, domestic violence cases, and the workplace. When a worker suffers PTSD, the workplace for that person has become a war zone. (See our button and bumper sticker stating this.)

Please know that these are injuries. Depression starts in bullied workers who never experienced it before. For the person who was previously depressed and successfully managing it, bullying exacerbates the condition. Bullying causes injuries, albeit psychological in nature and unseen, as surely one can be injured from physically unsafe conditions at work.

Bullying, Economic Crises, and Suicide

In these times of pandemic unemployment and loss of health insurance, many people are stressed as much as bullied workers have always been. Without insurance, mental health treatment is often unaffordable. The raging economic crisis takes a significant toll on individuals, couples, families, and children. Financial strain is linked to increased incidence of domestic violence, substance abuse, divorce, and a disruption of normal childhood development.

Sometimes, the violence is turned inward. When the "way out" seems unattainable and no alternatives can be imagined, some people contemplate suicide. In the WBI 2012-D Study, 29% of bullied targets considered suicide and 16% had a plan. If you or someone you know are talking about suicide, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at

Social Harm

Coworkers Ostracism: Shunning through Rejection to Abandonment

Humans are social animals. We need validation and confirmation of our humanity and normalcy with others. That's why social norms and the pressure to conform determine so much of our behavior (though we like to think we are rugged individualists, masters of our own universe) as so much research proves. Thus, when we have the bonds with others stripped away, we suffer a loss.

Kip Williams, the Purdue Univ. expert on ostracism, writing in the Annual Review of Psychology in 2007, has found that when an individual is exposed to social exclusion in a simulated game experiment, responses follow a predictable sequence: (a) a reflexive painful response, (b) increased sadness and anger stemming from threats to our need for belonging, self-esteem, control and meaningful existence, (c) a reflective, cognitive stage to appraise the situation, the reasons for and sources of ostracism, with individual differences guiding the resulting conclusion. If relational needs (belonging) are most thwarted, then the person might behave in a prosocial manner. If one's need to be recognized is most affected, then the person may result in attempts to regain control through provocative or antisocial actions. With repeated incidents of ostracism, the ability to respond at all is depleted, leading to feelings of helplessness, despair and alienation.

There is also neuroscience evidence that social exclusion triggers pain and trauma pathways in the brain. In 2011, there was an explosion of research on the feelings of physical pain related to breakups in romantic relationships. This is consistent with Williams' work. Advice for dealing with love lost was to take 2 ibuprofens! It helps.

A 2010 study found that groups tend to expel members whose generosity exceeds their own. The group throws out altruists because, by comparison, the greedier and more self-interested

within the group, can't stand the goodness of the one person. So, they expel them so they stop looking bad. The other reason is that people think the altruist fouls up the group's norm, pushing the group to be better than it actually is. It pushes the group toward a higher ethical standard than the average group member wants for the group.

The point should be clear. When people with whom we have daily intensive contact shun us, it hurts us and challenges our assumptions about our world.

Principal Findings from the WBI 2008 Co-Workers' Response Study

Online sample of 400 visitors to the WBI website, August, 2008. A self-selected sample of respondents, 95% of whom described themselves as targets of bullying in the workplace. 85% of survey respondents were women.

Here's what targets said their coworkers did in response to the bullying (of which they said 95% of coworkers were aware):

- 0.8% banded together and confronted the bully as a unit; stopped the bullying
- 7.1% offered specific advice to the target about what he or she should do to stop it
- 28.4% gave only moral, social support
- 15.7% did and said nothing, not helping either the target or bully
- 13.2% voluntarily distanced themselves from the target, isolating him or her
- 4.8% followed the bully's orders to stay away from the target
- 12.9% betrayed the target to the bully while appearing to still be friends
- 14.7% publicly sided with the bully and acted aggressively toward the target
- 2.5% Not sure

Even Family & Friends Tire

Spouses are the most supportive. However, we found in our year 2000 online study that women spouses sustained their relationships with bullied husbands longer than husbands stayed with bullied wives. Though family members give much more support than coworkers, they tire. Evenings, weekends and vacation time lost to the bullied target's obsession over her or his fate takes its toll on families. The target finds it impossible to turn off the agony after work. The family wants their spouse, father and brother back. Resentment grows. Family counseling could help. It also helps to share information at this website and the book, *The Bully At Work*, with family so they understand the pressure generated by bullying on the involuntary target.

It really makes sense for targets to make a deal with their families. While under duress from bullying, the family agrees to grant the target "emotional credits" and temporarily sacrifice a normal life. In exchange, the target agrees to work to end the bullying and get safe so those "credits" can be repaid and the family can once again have unlimited time with, and attention

from, the now-former target. It's a payback for compassion extended during the acute phases of the bullying.

Economic Harm

Financial Devastation

Workplace bullying, by definition, happens at work. It interferes with the target's confidence that her or his livelihood is assured. Broad societal economic crises threaten millions of workers at the same time and impersonally. Bullying is a laser-focused, personalized economic crisis affecting the target and her or his family. When bullies have control over the targets' livelihood (as in 72% of situations), they have tremendous leverage to cause financial pain. Single parent workers are the most vulnerable.

Controlling bullies can block transfers to a safe job, can make targets so miserable that they quit (constructive discharge), or impair target health to the extent they have to quit to stop the stress from a campaign of interpersonal destruction. In the U.S., losing work means losing health insurance. No job. Get even sicker. Lose the ability to seek medical help.

Some economic harms include...

- Lost opportunity to be left alone to do the once-"loved job"
- Forced to transfer from loved job, often a punitive transfer (13%)
- Constructively discharged without reasonable cause (24%)
- Target quits to reverse decline in health and sanity (40%)

Impact of Workplace Bullying on Family

Displacement, Withdrawal, Anxiety & Despondency

The most obvious and direct impact is displacement of the target's anger and shame about being bullied at work onto the family at home. This is akin to the coming home and "kicking the dog." When anger can't be leveled against the source of frustration and humiliation, the bully at work, especially when the bully is a boss, often the only outlet is outside work. The difficulty of confronting-stopping a boss is traced to the historical uphill battle to cross the "power gradient." Telling a boss to go to hell brings certain retaliation. It's part of our hierarchical world.

By the way, displacement could occur on the way home. Pity other drivers on the commute home or wait staff at restaurants at lunchtime who might be in harm's way. Nevertheless, most workers exposed to abusive supervision tend to bring it home. Violence at work begets violence at home.

Much more common is emotional withdrawal. Targets are overwhelmed by emotional abuse and exhausted at work. It takes all energy they can muster just to survive the 8 to 10 hours and commute to home. The stress strips away their appetite. So, they come home, skip dinner, and retire to bed seeking protection that sleep might provide. Sadly, sleep is disrupted by the distress caused by bullying. Solid REM sleep is rarely enjoyed. Sleep deficits make the targeted family member a non-participant, especially weekends. Traditions and family routines get postponed or abandoned completely. Everyone's schedules are changed to accommodate the wounded worker in the family. This builds resentment. But targets who do not seek counseling or have their bullying situations reversed are trapped in a sleepless withdrawal loop.

Bullied targets also bring home anxiety. This is a normal reaction to the personalized stressors that bullying poses — domination, intimidation and humiliation. Even for individuals who have never experienced abuse ([33% of workplace bullying targets](#)), bullying fosters anxiety, the forewarning of distress. Distress, in turn, causes many [stress-related health problems for targets](#). The point is that the anxiety is seen and felt by all family members exposed directly to it.

The inability to stop the bullying by the targeted parent creates a sense of despondency. The unhelpful reactions of coworkers further worsens the feeling. Thus, coming home is the message that mother or father or lover or wife or husband, once an integrated adult, is falling apart, suddenly powerless.

The coupling of anxiety and despondency is a toxic stew that affects the mood at home. Prolonged exposure renders both adults and children vulnerable to long-term effects from situations over which no one at home can control.

Spouses & Partners

The wrath heaped upon spouses and partners is the worst. Because of the shame, targets wait (unsuccessfully) for their situations to resolve themselves, and delay sharing details with their loved ones. Therefore, the unexpected emotional dumping catches partners off guard. They often do not know the underlying reason. Female partners are especially vulnerable to domestic violence — physical and emotional. Male partners at home could be subjected to emotional abuse (and some physical abuse). In any form, the violence teaches the children inappropriate ways to cope with stress.

For this reason, bullying can drive a wedge between partners. Separations and divorces result. From an early WBI survey we learned that women partners of bullied workers stayed longer in relationships than men did.

Seek couples counseling from a therapist who understands trauma — not just family dynamics. Though the experiences are vicarious, and not direct, the trauma is just as real for spouses and partners.

Of course, couples can be forced closer together to survive the emotional crises that bullying visits on them. Cohesion is high, but stress is doubled. Most of the stress comes from the impending loss of economic security. It is all worsened if the bullied partner is the sole wage earner for the family. Apprehension of facing destitution is distressful for everyone. Given the high probability that the target will lose her or his job, the fear is not imaginary. Bully bosses constantly threaten to end targets' job and hopes of finding the next job, which is dependent on a good referral from a supervisor. It is way too much control by one person over the life of another human being.

Spouses and partners aware of the bullying experience helplessness from not being able to stop it. They vicariously experience the emotional strain but cannot control its intensity or exposure time. They cannot intervene at work. They stand by watching their afflicted mate spiral down into an emotional morass with little they can do to help. Most partners try to stay positive, attempting to convince their targeted mate to be similarly positive. Eventually, even intimate others tire of rejected suggestions, their inability to make a difference, and attempts to protect the children. If the bullying does not stop, even the most loyal loving partner considers ending the relationship.

Children

Adult children, of course, will be affected like the non-targeted parent, if still living at home. Adult children in college or in the workforce will be capable of providing support to the bullied parent. The only possibility of harm from child to parent happens in the case of disbelief. As with coworkers or anyone listening to the bullied target's story, a child not treating the reported experience as credible is particularly debilitating to the parent.

Children old enough to be deprived of quality time with the bullied parent will voice their resentment and anger. That compounds the target's guilt. Now, guilt compounds the already present shame. However, for the child, it is somewhat healthier to express her or his negative feelings.

Young children should not be expected to understand the reason for the bullied parent's behavioral or emotional changes. In fact, rarely do targets and spouses understand. They must be shielded and protected. The greatest danger, short of the risk of violence, is that the bullied parent's withdrawal deprives the developing child of the much-needed intimate relationship with that parent. If the bullied parent is not the one who deprives the child of the security of emotional acceptance, the other parent must work doubly hard to not allow tending to the partner lead to an inadvertent deprivation. Research demonstrates clearly that parental emotional deprivation leads to neurological deficits in the ability to experience or express empathy and compassion for others. In other words, young children in households invaded by workplace bullying may become socially impaired as a result.

Finally, young children will also absorb the prevalent emotional climate in the home. If it is unbounded optimism, acceptance and love, they will be healthy adults. If, instead, it is a feeling

of anxiety, they will develop an unhealthy level of *neuroticism*. They become less resistant to life stressors, more likely to manifest fear, anxiety, depression and mood disorders. Instead of developing resilience, they are sensitive or hypersensitive. They become more prone to be bullied in school, in the workplace and in relationships.

The Scourge of Co-Dependency

A family with a parent bullied at work is akin to a dysfunctional family with a member suffering alcoholism or substance addiction or emotional trauma. Everyone avoids engagement with the afflicted person. They learn to walk on “eggshells” lest they trigger emotional episodes. They subordinate their own needs to those of the “special person” in the family. They learn to communicate in code. They speak “around” the person they fear directly confronting. They learn to be so good at indirect communication, they never learn, in the case of young children, or forget, in the case of adults, how to be clear and direct about what they personally want and need. Truthfulness is sacrificed for the sake of survival. Timidity replaces courage. Fear dominates. It becomes a way of life. It’s no way for children to grow up healthy and emotionally confident and strong.

As adults, a co-dependent “worldview” accepts abuse as normal routine. Co-dependent people never challenge institutions that threaten their identity. They do not become the change agents. Instead, they are the silent compliant ones who enable the abusive conduct of others.

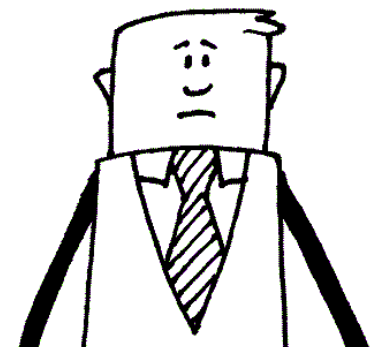
Co-dependents become the do-nothing witnesses to injustice in our world that stand idly by, preferring to lurk in the shadows they think will protect them from being future targets.

Costs to the Organization

Of course, if your employees are suffering, your company is going to suffer, too. Possible costs to your organization from bullying can include:

- Reduced morale
- Decreased productivity
- Increased time off due to stress and illness
- Damage to your reputation and/or brand name
- Increased legal costs and insurance premiums
- Increased turnover, resulting in higher recruiting and training costs
- Increased costs for health benefits
- Resources and time spent in dealing with bullying issues and the fallout

The total financial cost **to American corporations alone** is estimated to be in the billions of dollars each year. Can your organization afford these costs?



Session Two: Why Bullies Do What They Do

Origins of Bullying Behavior



Think Points

Take time to think about - Why do people bully others?

We've all asked ourselves the age-old question: why do people act the way that they do? When it comes to bullies, there are several main reasons for their behavior.

It is important for bullying targets to understand that **bullying is never their fault**.

Understanding why someone acts the way they do may help to take some of the burden off of your shoulders. However, a person's background, personality disorders, today's weather, or any other excuses you can think of are no reason for bullying another human being.

Nature or Nurture

We all knew bullies in school who pushed people around to get what they wanted.

Unfortunately, many schoolyard bullies continue their behavior through school and out into the workplace. People may also have learned bullying from parents or relatives as they were growing up.

Personality Disorders

Many personality disorders can result in bullying behavior, including:

- Narcissism
- Anti-social personality disorder
- Borderline personality disorder
- Paranoia
- Histrionic tendencies

Mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder (formerly called manic depression) can also result in bullying behavior. This doesn't mean that you have to put up with it, though. It just means that the bully needs help to stop their behavior.

They Like It

Some people are sadists – they get pleasure out of other people’s pain. Perhaps they don’t feel that they’re doing their job if your life is too easy. Or perhaps they feel that they need to bully you to help you grow. Whatever their motivation, they’re not justified in bullying others.

Personal Issues

Some people bully because of personal issues in their lives. Perhaps they are having a tough time at home and are taking it out on people at the workplace. Perhaps they are abusing drugs or alcohol, substances which can cause behavior problems. Regardless of what is going on in their personal lives, these problems are never an excuse to treat people poorly.

They’re Just Mean

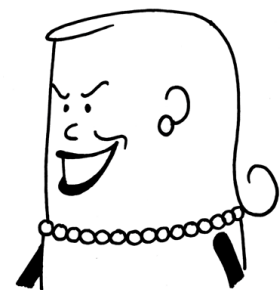
Some people are just mean at the core. Think of the Grinch and how he treated everyone, even his poor dog! No matter what their personal issues or personality traits are, they need to learn to be civil and respectful in the workplace.

The Scorpion and the Frog

There is an old parable about a scorpion and a frog. The scorpion asked the frog for a ride across a river. The frog asked, “How do I know you will not sting me?” The scorpion says, “If I sting you, then we will both die.”

This makes sense to the frog, so he agrees to give the scorpion a ride on his back. Halfway across the river, the scorpion stings him. “Why did you sting me?” asks the frog. “I could not help it,” says the scorpion. “It is in my nature to sting.”

Just as the scorpion couldn’t help stinging the frog, bullies often don’t know any other way to behave. However, that doesn’t make it acceptable.



Think Point



Think Points

Slide Material

Take time to think about this chart. Have you experienced this? Are you a bully? Really take time to ask your self the tough questions and look at the behaviors that you as an employee do or participate in? The responsibility starts with each of us individually to make the change in our workplace culture.

Acceptable Behavior	Rude Behavior (But Not Bullying)	Bullying Behavior
Giving someone a negative performance review using constructive criticism	Not listening to what your employees have to say	Demanding that one employee take all lunches at their desk
Taking a colleague aside and gently pointing out that their zipper is down	Avoiding office events	Following an employee to their haircut to ensure that it is done the way that you want
Politely asking all employees to put in an extra hour of work (at their convenience) during a busy time	Interrupting others	Insulting an employee (to their face or warning others about them)
Forgetting to send a team e-mail to one employee	Offering unwanted advice about a co-worker's personal life	Leaving an employee out of every team e-mail

Summary

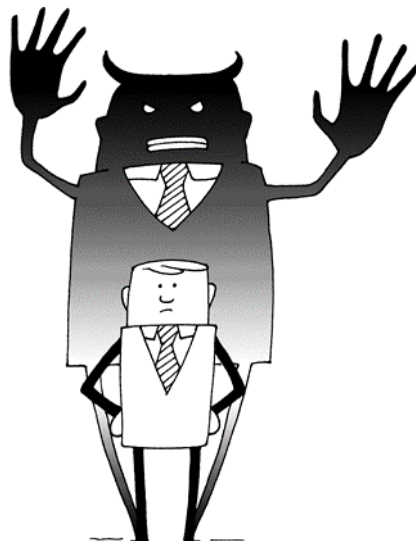
The Workplace Bullying Institute lists the following **ten tactics** as the most common ones used by bullies:

1. Blaming the target for errors that do not actually exist
2. Unreasonable job demands
3. Excessive criticizing
4. Inconsistent application of rules and procedures to the target
5. Threatening the target with termination
6. Insults and put-downs
7. Denying their accomplishments
8. Exclusion and isolation
9. Yelling, screaming, and general verbal abuse
10. Taking credit for the target's ideas

In general, bullies are predators who sense weakness and prey on that. They look for the easy target, and the target who will give them the biggest victory. They are all about power and control.

Bullies are:

- Aggressors, manipulators, liars, and/or predators.
- People who have learned that aggression means success. Bullying is a tool in their toolkit, albeit one that should be tossed in the trash.
- People who have not learned to take responsibility for their own behavior.
- In most cases, unable to realize how their actions impact others. They blame the other person for not being tough enough, or good enough, to justify their actions.
- Usually unwilling to change.



Other Types of Bullying

Bullying can come in all shapes and forms. Let's look at the most common types of bullying.

Corporate Bullying

This occurs when bullying becomes a way of life in a company or organization. The bully may:

- Force employees to work long hours
- Pile an unreasonable amount of work on employees
- Deny employees vacation and/or sick time
- Have a “my way or the highway” attitude
- Spy on employees in an attempt to find ammunition against them
- Demand inappropriate or confidential information from employees (for example, why they required sick leave)
- Pressure co-workers into documenting, filing, and/or falsifying complaints and problems with other employees
- Punish or fire employees who cannot handle the workload

Displaced Bullying

Bullies may also behave covertly. A common tactic is to subtly pit two employees against each other and then fan the flames. (In *Understanding, Controlling, and Stopping Bullies at Work*, expert Margaret Kohut compares it to animal fighting.) The bully is entertained by the spectacle and enjoys the discomfort of the participants.

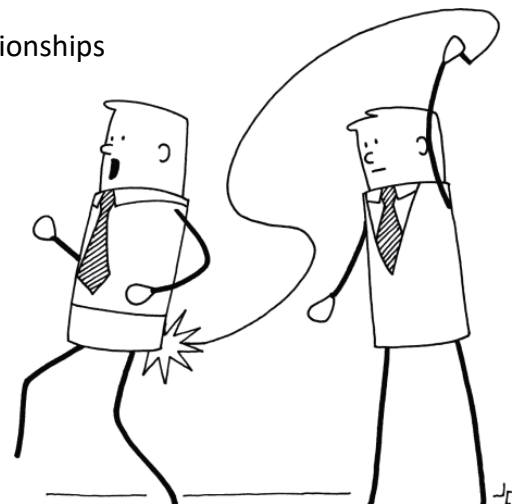
Serial Bullying

Serial bullies are one of the most dangerous types of perpetrators out there. This bully must always have someone to prey on. They often distribute traits similar to psychopaths, including:

- Personality swings (Jekyll and Hyde)
- Excellent ability to lie, charm, connive, con, and deceive
- Charming and manipulative
- Poor emotional development, resulting in shallow relationships

Mob Bullying

Mob bullying is when a group of individuals turns on one target.



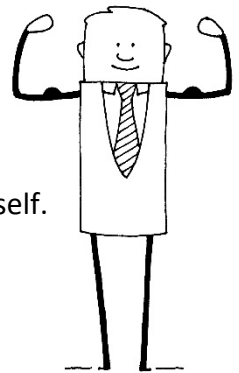
Session Three: Building a Shield Against Bullies

Distorted Thinking

One of the most common things that we see amongst bullying targets is the gradual destruction of their self-confidence. The bullying erodes at their self-esteem and their perception of themselves until nothing is left except what the bully wants them to see. Here are some common ways that thinking can be distorted and how bullying targets can take control of the cycle.

All or Nothing Thinking

- **Definition:** Looking at yourself in black and white categories.
- **Example:** “I’m a total failure; I’m not good at anything.”
- **Cure:** When you have a thought like this, try to play devil’s advocate with yourself. Think of something that you are good at, even if it’s just something small.



Mental Filter

- **Definition:** Dwelling on a single event and letting it discolor your entire view of life, much like a drop of ink can discolor a whole glass of water.
- **Example:** “No wonder my kids don’t respect me. I can’t even do my job right.”
- **Cure:** Separate problems to help you get at the root of them.

Magnification or Minimization

- **Definition:** Blowing a negative event out of proportion or minimizing a positive event.
- **Example:** “I didn’t deserve that promotion. It was just luck.”
- **Cure:** Give yourself praise when you deserve it. We are often taught that it’s wrong to give ourselves a pat on the back. Overcome this conditioning and reward yourself when you overcome a challenge or do something well.

Emotional Reasoning

- **Definition:** Reasoning from how you feel.
- **Example:** You made a small mistake on a recent project, so you feel like a total incompetent idiot. You shouldn’t even have a job!
- **Cure:** Give yourself a reality check. Example: “Sure, I made a small mistake in those figures, but I fixed it before anyone else saw it. The client seemed really impressed at the presentation, too.”

“Should” Statements

- **Definition:** Placing unrealistic expectations on yourself.
- **Example:** After completing a project, you think of all of the things that you should have done differently.
- **Cure:** Hindsight is 20/20. Treat life as lessons learned rather than mistakes and regrets, and you will be a lot happier with yourself.

Chicken Little

- **Definition:** Always thinking that the sky is going to fall down.
- **Example:** You got some good results from medical tests, but you think, “I have that blood test coming up next week. I am sure that will show something wrong.”
- **Cure:** Take each day as it comes. Celebrate good news when you get it; this will build strength for when bad times do arrive.

Personalization

- **Definition:** Assuming personal responsibility for everything.
- **Example:** “I feel so terrible that Jane didn’t get that promotion. I bet it’s because I didn’t meet my sales numbers.”
- **Cure:** When you feel responsible for something, do a careful analysis of what your role was. Often you’ll find that you’re giving yourself too much blame, and rarely enough credit.

Think Points

Add or think about other types of distorted thinking, as well as other cures that they have found useful.

Your Toolkit Against Bullies

Think Points

In addition to monitoring our thinking patterns, what other things could we do to be stronger against bullies?

Possible answers:

- Build our assertiveness skills
- Set good personal boundaries
- Identify our needs and wants
- Realize that we can't be perfect

Ways to Build Your Skills

Ways to Build Your Assertiveness Skills

- Pretend you are confident
- When you meet people, look them in the eye
- Know your stuff
- Rehearsal is the best confidence builder
- Every day, remind yourself that you have done some things well
- Read inspiring biographies and autobiographies
- Be thankful
- Push yourself to accomplish short-term goals
- Do something for yourself every week

Setting Boundaries

There are two parts to your boundaries: emotional and physical. Bullies can invade both. In terms of **physical space**, if someone is invading your comfort zone, you can step back, place a physical boundary (like a desk) between you and them, or ask them to step back.

In terms of **emotional space**, if someone is asking personal questions, offering unwanted advice, or sharing too much information, it's OK to stop the conversation. You can say, "I'd rather not discuss that at work," or, "I don't think that's an appropriate topic."

Remember, **bullies sense fear and prey on weakness**. Show them up front that you are strong and they will usually back down and find an easier target.

Identify Your Wants and Needs:

Identifying what you want out of life can help you keep perspective when things get tough. Set short and long term goals for yourself. To help you create good goals, remember the SPIRIT acronym.

- **Specific:** Be specific about what you want or don't want to achieve. The result should be tangible and measurable.
- **Prizes:** Reward yourself at different points in the goal, particularly if it's long-term.
- **Individual:** The goal must be something that you want to do. If your spouse wants you to lose 20 pounds but you think you look fine, you're not going to want to work towards the goal.
- **Review:** Review your progress periodically. Does the goal still make sense to you? Is it still giving you energy and something you find motivating? Are you stuck? Do you need to adjust certain parts of it?
- **Inspiring:** Frame the goal positively. Make it fun to accomplish. You could make a poster of the end result, frame it, and post it on the wall.
- **Time-Bound:** Give yourself a deadline for achieving the goal. Even better, split the goal into small parts and give yourself a deadline for each item.

Throw out Perfectionism

Life is not measured by percentages or letter grades that we got in school. Stop thinking that you have to do everything perfectly, and accept "good enough" as a new pattern. When self-esteem is in low supply, we often try to compensate in other areas. Our desks and offices must be perfect. Our homes must look clean and dusted at all times. The food we prepare has to be exceptional in both preparation and presentation.

But **life is not perfect, and it does not have to be**. Think of the value you get from taking a brisk walk and getting some fresh air instead of trying to maintain such a high level of expectation on everything, like keeping a perfect home or getting to the gym for 90 minutes five days a week. There is plenty of value to keeping order about things, but there is very little benefit that comes from having a perfect household or office or workout schedule.

Once we get out of school, **life is really measured as "pass/fail"** rather than a grade. Accepting this will help you avoid distorted thinking that requires everything to be perfect.

☑ Think Point

Take the fifteen minutes to answer remaining questions. Key points of the training up until this point included:

- What is bullying?
- The costs of bullying to people and organizations
- What bullying behavior looks like
- What people can do to protect themselves from bullies

Session Four: What to Do If It Happens to You

Telling it Like it Is

This morning we learned that bullies often play mind games. This can cause the target to lose all sense of right and wrong and up and down. Their sense of reality becomes totally warped and distorted by the bully's actions. They are often made to feel guilty and responsible for what is happening to them.

When targets are being bullied, they may rationalize the bully's behavior with thoughts like:

- I did really terrible on that project. I deserved to be yelled at.
- Times are tough. My manager is just doing what is necessary to keep the team on track.
- I just need to build a thicker skin.

Remember: No matter who you are, you do not deserve to be bullied. To give you some perspective on what bullying is, let's look at when bullying occurs and what it often looks like to the target.

When Does Bullying Happen?

Bullying is always about power and control. Bullying situations often happen when the balance of power shifts. Some common **scenarios** include:

- A new person is managing the team
- A new person joins the team
- Two teams merge together

Gary and Ruth Namie identify three common **reasons for being bullied:**

- The target refuses to bend to another's wishes
- The target is better than the bully in some way (smarter, better with people, more attractive, etc.)

- The target is a whistleblower and has high moral standards

How Do I Know If I'm Being Bullied?

Here are some things that might indicate bullying is present. We would suggest that if three or more of these points apply to you, you can be fairly sure that you are being bullied.

- You have severe anxiety about going to work.
- You are physically ill when you have to go to work. (Many bullying targets report vomiting in the morning.)
- You feel so ashamed and/or guilty about what is happening that you haven't told anyone.
- Although you haven't told anyone about the bullying, your co-workers, family, and/or friends have asked if something is wrong at work.
- You use sick days as sanity days to get a break from the bullying.
- You notice that you are treated much differently from co-workers. (Sometimes bullies treat their targets as alternately the golden child and the problem child, further confusing the target.)
- You don't enjoy activities outside of work and time spent with loved ones.
- Work that was acceptable before is never good enough.
- You feel that the bully doesn't trust you to complete work. They micro-manage and interfere.
- You suspect that others have been through your personal space at work (such as your desk, computer, and personal belongings).
- The bully's actions are undermining the company. For example, you have to re-do a project so many times that it puts you behind schedule and makes other projects late. (Of course, this reinforces the message that you are an incompetent failure.)
- You have frequent emotional outbursts, such as crying or yelling.
- You believe that you're responsible for what is happening to you.
- Other people at work have been warned that you are a problem in the workplace, asked to file complaints about you, or asked to avoid you.
- Other people at work see what is happening, agree with you, but do not want to act.
- You often receive unpleasant surprises at work, such as short-notice meetings, deadlines moved, and new projects assigned. Other people do not experience this to the same degree.
- Others verbally harass you with insults, yelling, and put-downs.
- Others accuse you of harassment, incompetence, and criminal offences.
- Personal information, such as medical records, is brought into the workplace and used against you.
- You get a performance review that shows that you are incompetent, despite excellent reviews prior to this.
- You are not allowed to transfer to another department or apply for other positions.

What Works and What Doesn't?

Strategies That Don't Work

If someone is bullying you, here are some things not to do.

Ignore or avoid the bully.

This is an approach many people take because they think it's the least harmful. It's actually more harmful: the victim suffers in silence and the problem doesn't get resolved.

Try to appease the bully.

No matter what you do, it will not be good enough. Making jokes doesn't work either.

Comply with the aggressor.

Bullying is a power struggle. Once you give into one demand, they will push for more.

Aggression.

Cursing, yelling, or otherwise abusing the bully doesn't resolve anything. It makes you look out of control and shows the bully that they do have power over you. It can also put you at risk for violence.

Short-Term Survival Tips

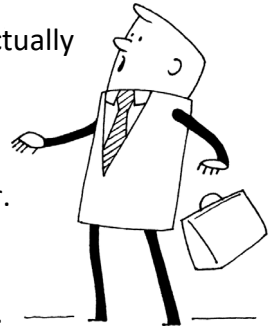
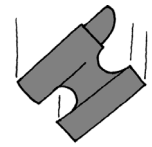
Being bullied is never easy, but there are some things that you can do immediately and in the short term to help you survive.

As we discussed earlier, it is important to be **assertive**. Say no and make others respect your boundaries. Often, if you take a stance right away, the bully will go look for easier prey.

Your **body language** plays a big part in this. To show assertiveness, stand up straight, don't fidget, and maintain eye contact. Ensure that you're not physically cornered.

Remember that **becoming the target of a bully is in no way your fault**. It has nothing to do with your actions or who you are as a person. This may help you detach yourself emotionally from the bully's verbal abuse. We know that it's hard not to get upset when someone is slinging abuse at you, but remember that you don't have to take it!

Do what you can to **minimize contact with the bully**. Try to communicate with them via e-mail or over the phone as much as possible. You shouldn't completely avoid them, as we mentioned earlier – just to try to have interactions with them on your terms.



Most importantly, build a **support network**. Focus on the people who trust you at work and who have positive things to say about you. Keep those things in mind when you're dealing with a bully – not their unfounded accusations and mud-slinging.

Long-Term Strategies for Success

In contrast to typical advice about harassment, Gary and Ruth Namie recommend **not** consulting HR, management, or your union when you realize that you have been bullied. Their research has shown that these resources do more harm than good.

Step One: Take Care of Priorities

Your first priority is yourself. Once you have identified what is happening to you, call it what it is: bullying. Take control of your emotions and stop the cycle of denial and self-blame. You did not incur this on yourself, nor do you deserve it.

Next, start looking for a new job. According to the Namies' research, 64% of bullying targets lose their jobs as a result of the bullying. Fair? Definitely not. But it's a reality that you must be prepared for.

Step Two: Take Time and Make a Plan

Take sick time or vacation time if at all possible. You may even want to go on short-term disability if your physical or mental health is being affected.

Use this time to plan your approach. There are several key things that you should do:

- Make an appointment with your doctor for a check-up. Bullying and the resultant stress can do real damage to your body.
- Talk to a licensed professional about what has been happening to you. This will help you get perspective and start the healing process.
- Do some research on your company's policies as well as the laws in your area. Find out what your rights are.
- Create a file that documents all the bullying incidents and what impact the bullying has had on the organization. Stick to facts and figures as much as possible.
- Meet with an attorney to confirm your research and determine what the best plan for you is.

Keep your complaint and any documents related to it to yourself. Make sure that everything is secured in a safe place – away from prying eyes.

Step Three: Act!

There are three basic routes that you can take at this point. Be sure to think through all of your options carefully. Take your time and talk it over with friends, family, your attorney, and other professionals. Do not talk about it in your workplace, however!

Walk Away

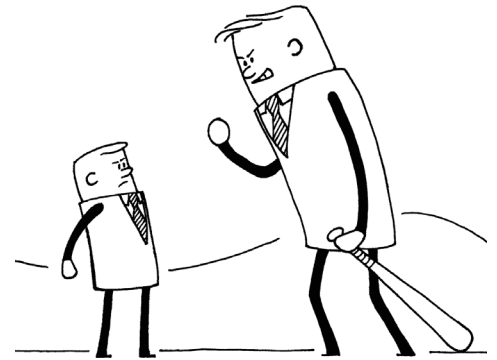
Many bullying targets choose not to file a complaint or lawsuit. They simply walk away from the organization and cut their losses.

The advantage to this is that it offers you a clean break and a fast way to start over again. It also means that you can usually still secure a good reference. However, you may not feel closure or resolution – important factors in the healing process. As well, it is likely that the bully will just pick a new target. However, remember that you're the most important priority. If this is what you need to do, then do it.

Stand and Fight

If you decide to fight back against the bully, be aware that you're facing an uphill battle. Sadly, bullies almost always win, and the target is forced out of the organization (or worse).

Your first step should be to file an internal complaint in the organization. Be aware that you may not be believed and retaliation is quite likely. Be sure to include only the barest facts in your filing and file as soon as possible after you have identified the bullying. As well, do not sign or agree to anything without reviewing it with your attorney first.



We're aware of instances where someone has been bullied or harassed at work, and they sign an agreement as part of a mediated resolution that can later restrict them from using that employer as a reference. This can really interfere with your ability to get the next job, so you need to be diligent about what is included. We have also seen people sign unlimited medical releases, and then employers use that information against them in the bullying case.

Many employers offer counseling support through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). See if this is part of your benefit package, or if psychological counseling is covered elsewhere by your extended health benefits. If you have no benefits, sometimes there is help through a community organization in your area. If you are a member of a union, they are normally obligated to help you. Professionals can help you work through emotions that surface and give you an objective form of support as you go through this process.

If this does not work, you can pursue other legal actions, such as criminal or civil lawsuits. These are expensive, lengthy, and usually unsuccessful, but they are an option.

Stick to High Ground

Gary and Ruth Namie recommend a third approach which we find quite interesting. They suggest building a business case showing the financial impact of the bully and presenting it to the executive team. Speak their language and you might be surprised at the results that you get!

You may still end up leaving the company, but you can feel confident that you at least tried to make a difference. As well, this approach is often less emotional and intimate than a formal complaint.

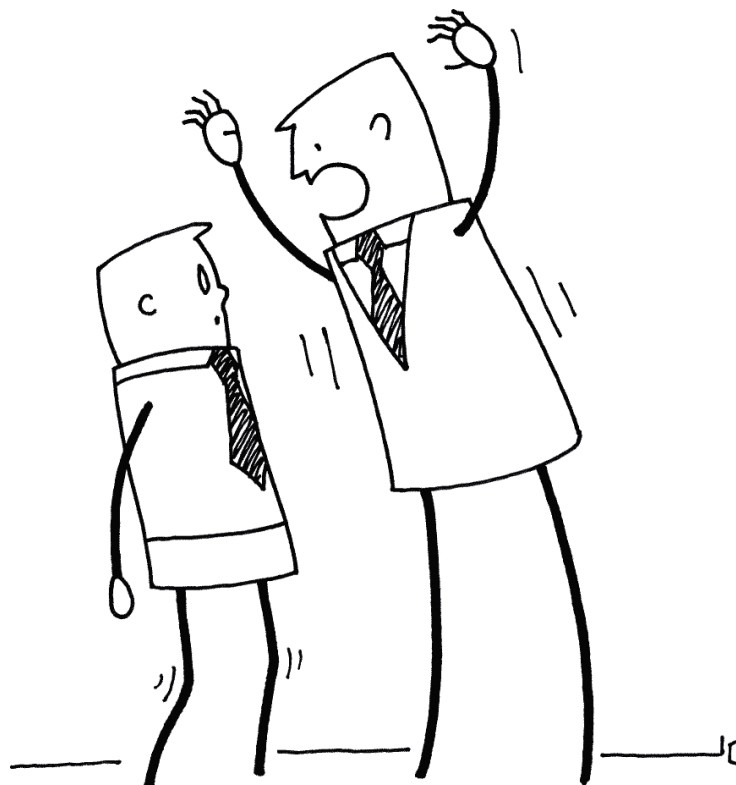
Applying Skills

① Think Point

Consider the following scenarios:

- An employee has submitted a project that needs some revisions.
- You just found out that a co-worker didn't complete their part of a project.
- An employee has been sick a lot lately and has used up all of their sick time.
- The seating arrangement in the office needs to be changed.

Using the information discussed to this point think about correct ways these scenarios can be approached without bullying a fellow employee.



Think Point – Applying Skills

Think Point

Now with the above scenarios think about ways an employee could be bullied in those situations.

Now put the shoe on the other foot – and think about it from an employee perspective in terms of being bullied under those scenarios:

- How did it feel being the bully?
- How did it feel being the target?
- What response strategies were used?
- How would the situation be different if it was in real life?
- How do you see bullying now?
- What learning points can we take away from this?

Session Six: What to Do If You Witness Bullying

Research by Gary and Ruth Namie shows that although 95-97% of co-workers are aware when a target is being bullied, only 8% of those people actually did something about it. An additional 28% offered moral support. The remainder did nothing or actually sided with the bully!

(Source: The Bully at Work – Second Edition, Namie & Namie, 2009)

Thinking Point

So, think about the following:

- Why would people do nothing?

The biggest reason is **fear**. As much as we hate to see others get hurt, we often think, “I’m glad it’s not me.” Witnesses are often afraid that speaking up might turn them into a target – and they’re right, it’s a real possibility.

Other reasons can include:

- No one wants to take the bull by the horns and talk about the elephant in the room
- People prefer the path of least resistance
- We are trained to think that the boss is always right

Remember: If you do nothing, you’re an accomplice to the bully. Say something to someone – even if it’s just a few words of support to the target.

Case Study

Doctors, particularly surgeons, often bully those around them. Nurses around the world have developed a “Code Pink.” If a doctor starts bullying a nurse, other nurses in the vicinity will stand beside the nurse being bullied, or form a circle around them. They will also display assertive body language and stare at the doctor until they realize that their behavior isn’t acceptable. This is a strong way of stating that no one will tolerate bullying, and it often prevents it from happening again.

Things to Say

① Think Point

Take time to brainstorm things that you could say if they witness or experience bullying. What could you do? How would you react? What do you think you should do?



Scenarios for Thought

☑ Think Point

Take this point and think about the talking points below. The most important thing to remember is to be calm and be objective when talking back to a bully. Remember the tips that we talked about in the previous session on dealing with bullies.

Witnessing Bullying as a Manager

- I have some concerns about how you spoke to Jud in the meeting yesterday. Your tone and words were bullying. That's not accepted in this organization.
- I noticed that your interaction with Jane yesterday was quite aggressive, to the point that I would call it bullying. That's not accepted in this organization.
- **IMPORTANT:** If you witness bullying on your team, you have a duty to nip it in the bud.

Witnessing Bullying as a Subordinate or Co-Worker

- Comments like that aren't productive.
- I don't think your tone/language is very professional.
- I don't appreciate comments/jokes about <topic>.
- I don't agree with you. Jim did a great job on this project. It was late because there were some extra requirements that we had to meet.
- Take it easy!

Receiving Bullying as a Target

- If you have feedback to give me, please give it to me in private.
- I can't discuss this with you until you stop yelling.
- Please don't call me <insult.>
- I cannot fix the problem until we focus on it, not me.
- I'd love to improve my sales numbers but being called names doesn't help me achieve that goal – and it doesn't help the company, either.





WV DOH Training & Development Self-Quiz Answer Sheet

RETURN THIS ANSWER SHEET WITH YOUR TELEWORK LOG

Training Title:

Name:

Date:

Instructions: Answer the following questions with the correct answer.

Quiz Question #1: - True/False

Bullying is referred to as Psychological Violence

Answer:

Quiz Question #2: - True/False

A key characteristic of bullying is that it is done to control and/or destroy another person, often with the intent of forcing them out of the company.

Answer:

Quiz Question #3: - True/False

There is no real impact on emotional or physical health of person who has been bullied.

Answer:

Quiz Question #4: - True/False

An example of a bullying behavior would be demanding that one employee take all lunches at their desk.

Answer:

Quiz Question #5: - True/False

An example of bullying behavior would be interrupting others.

Answer:

End of Quiz – Remember to submit this quiz answer sheet with your Telework Logs!