

Article for the Bully Free Community Education Campaign

Workplace Bullying (Part I)

By

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More and more attention is being given to workplace bullying. It is considered a form of health-harming behavior (physical, verbal, written, social and/or electronic) by one or more individuals that is intentional, hurtful (physical and/or psychological) and persistent (repeated). Since there is an imbalance of power (physical or psychological – real or perceived), it is often threatening and creates a hostile workplace. The person's safety is at risk and their job or career is jeopardized, as well as their relationships (*Beane, 2012*).

Some very interesting research has been conducted to determine the nature of bullying in the workplace. For example, the ten most common workplace behaviors experienced by bullied employees are (*2010 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey*):

- Falsely accusing someone of “errors” not actually made (71%)
- Nonverbally intimidating and showing hostility with stares and glares (68%)
- Discounting the person's thoughts or feelings in meetings (64%)
- Using the “silent treatment” to socially isolate (64%)
- Making up rules on the fly that even she/he does not follow (61%)
- Exhibiting uncontrollable mood swings in front of the group (61%)
- Disregarding satisfactory or outstanding quality of completed work despite evidence (58%)
- Harshly and constantly criticizing someone - holding them to a different standard than others (57%)
- Starting, or failing to stop, destructive rumors or gossip about a person (56%)
- Encouraging people to turn against them (55%)

Approximately 37% of U.S. workers have reported being bullied on the job. Forty-nine percent say they have witnessed a bully in action. This represents 86% of the employees being affected by bullying in the workplace. That means over 71.5 million Americans are affected by bullying in the workplace. The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI), a Washington State-based non-profit group serving the U.S. and Canada found that:

- 40% of targets never tell their employers
- 43% of targets are bullied by co-workers
- 36% are bullied by supervisors
- 38% of bullies are women
- 62% of bullies are men
- 58% of targets are women
- 42% of targets are men

What does research tell us about employer involvement in preventing and stopping bullying? A 2010 survey found 33% of employees believe their employer is “very engaged” in preventing bullying. The same survey revealed 43% believe their employer is “unengaged” and were

unaware of any employer involvement to prevent and stop bullying (*2010 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey*).

We will continue this discussion in the next article.

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