

How to identify bullying in the workplace

Bullying is an intentional repeated pattern of offensive, insulting, threatening behavior. It is an abuse which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable.

Bullying is not an attempt to get things done by management or an occasional disagreement. If these behaviors are consistent and offend or harm you then they could be bullying.

Bully's behavior:

- › Distorts truth and reality
- › Charming in public - two faced
- › Blames others for errors
- › Bullies tend to be insecure people
- › A bully doesn't want to hear the other side of the story
- › Does not try to understand or get another point of view
- › A bully needs to control people
- › Makes inappropriate comments about appearance, lifestyle
- › Takes credit for others work

A bully uses threats and harassment to intimidate. A bully ridicules to destroy confidence and self esteem. A bully tries to make others disrespect you. Often these behaviors are done in front of others, at meetings, or by email.

Studies have shown the bully is most likely to be the boss (male or female).

Examples of bullies who have authority:

- › Threatens to terminate your employment
- › Bad evaluations
- › Makes your life difficult
- › Punishes for petty things
- › Suggests you have emotional problems
- › Demeans your role
- › Yells and screams at you

- › Suggests you are incompetent
- › Suggests you are too sensitive
- › A bully will misinterpret what you say to make you look bad
- › May exclude you from meetings etc.
- › Overwork with unreasonable timelines.
- › Fails to return your calls

The target of a bully is most often a person that is popular and competent. This person is often seen as a threat to the bully. Studies have also shown the most often it is a female that is being bullied.

At first you might not recognize the behavior as bullying. You may think the situation will pass and was nothing to worry about.

Over time you might start to doubt yourself and think you did something wrong.

Signs that you might be bullied:

- › You feel strained
- › You find yourself walking on eggshells
- › You are quieter than usual
- › You go out of your way to avoid the bully
- › You are afraid to open your mouth in front of this person
- › You pretend to get along with this person
- › You choose your words carefully when around this person
- › Your making more errors on the job
- › A bully usually picks on a person that is non-confrontational

Each incident alone may seem unimportant but over a period of time they can build and cause stress.

Signs of stress from bullying:

- › You dread going to work
- › Worry about your future
- › You feel drained
- › Trouble sleeping
- › Anger/irritability

- › You engage in self destructive behavior
- › Headaches
- › Depression
- › Loss of confidence
- › Panic attacks

Why people put up with bullying

- › Too emotionally stressed to deal with it
- › Afraid of losing their job
- › They are embarrassed or intimidated
- › May feel nothing will change
- › Afraid of retaliation
- › Afraid the situation may get more severe

Effects of bullies at the workplace

- › Staff turnover
- › Low employee morale
- › Absenteeism
- › Poor work output/loss of productivity
- › Legal action
- › Workmen's compensation claims
- › Poor customer service

What to do if you're being bullied

- › Tell someone
- › Keep a journal
- › Confront the bully with a witness – this may be hard to do but the bully won't go away if you ignore the situation or write a letter stating you want the bully to stop.
- › Contact the AA Office for help.

Examples of things to say or do to stop the bully

Your calling me names instead of addressing the problem is unacceptable.

If you are so angry that you cannot communicate in a calm manner than let's wait and discuss this at another time.

Let the bully know if the behavior does not stop you'll be forced to take further action.

What can cause bully behavior?

Studies show that events like downsizing, being overworked, and job insecurity can cause a person to behave like a bully.

A bully is often an overworked, middle manager, someone who is overloaded and cannot cope, or handle the stress.

A person may progress into a bully after a promotion.

The person might have a drug or alcohol problem.

The bully thinks this is how they should behave.

Could my actions be taken as bullying?

- > Do you yell at meetings?
- > Do you enjoy confrontations?
- > Does your department have high absenteeism or high turnover?
- > Do you avoid thinking about how others might feel if you say or do hurtful things to them?
- > Do you find it difficult to trust others?
- > Have you ever been in trouble (as a child) for bullying or physical violence?
- > Do you need to control those around you?

What can I do?

- > Apologize to people you've bullied.
- > If you feel like you're having trouble controlling your feelings/anger talk to a counselor.
- > Attend seminars.

Where to go for help

- > Contact the Affirmative Programs Director
- > Your union rep
- > Counseling Services
- > AA Library
 - The Bully at Work
 - Changing the Bully Who Rules the World
- > Human Resources

Web-sites:

<http://www.workdoctor.com/home/studies.html>
<http://www.kickbully.com>

The Workplace Bully

How to recognize signs of being bullied
What to do if you're being bullied
Where to get help