



Creating A Bully-Free Workplace

By Gayle Wiebe Oudeh and Nabil Oudeh



CCR
INTERNATIONAL

Centre for Conflict Resolution International Ltd.
www.ccrinternational.com
info@ccrinternational.com
888-421-7822 or 613-239-3127

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What is Bullying?	Page 4
The Epidemic of Workplace Bullying	Page 7
Types of Bullying.....	Page 9
Are You a Bully?	Page 15
What to Do if You are Being Bullied	Page 20
Creating a Bully-Free Workplace.....	Page 24

What is Bullying?

Bullying has long been identified as an issue in the schoolyard. But only recently has the prevalence of bullying in the workplace been acknowledged.

What, exactly, do we mean by the term bullying? While specific definitions vary, there are three key factors to bullying:

- 1. It is a repeated action or behavior.**
- 2. It is directed towards a specific worker or group of workers.**
- 3. It is intended to and/or it does make the target feel intimidated, upset, humiliated, and/or threatened.**

Let's look at each of these factors individually.

1. It is a repeated action or behavior.

Bullying is an accumulation of incidences of negative, targeted behavior. And it is this pattern of behavior that is significant in identifying bullying. In fact, if you were to look at a single incident, in its own context, it may not appear to be of significance. In fact, it might look so insignificant that it would not be worthy of disciplinary action by the company or organization. But if you were to look at the same incident in the context of repeated, similar actions and/or behaviors, you would identify a pattern of behavior designed to intimidate and/or humiliate the target.

Bullying, therefore, is not occasional rudeness or aggressive behavior. These are singular, individual instances of poor behavior that do not signify an ongoing pattern and so cannot be defined as bullying. In all working relationships, there are bound to be some differences of opinion, conflicts and problems. This is to be expected. But if and when the treatment of another person is unreasonable or offensive, then workplace bullying exists and must be addressed.

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

2. It is directed towards a specific worker or group of workers.

Bullying is targeted. Frequently, the bully targets someone he/she feels threatened by. Almost always, the bully's desire is to exert some form of power or control over another person or group. This may or may not be a conscious decision on the part of the bully.

Bullying in the workplace is rarely physical violence, although it can and does lead to physical violence in some instances. More often, it is as if the bully is waging some sort of "negativity campaign" against another individual or group. Much of this bullying behavior is done out of eyesight or earshot of other authority figures (if the authority figure is likely to confront the bully) or the target (if the target is likely to confront the bully). In fact, some individuals being bullied may not even be initially aware of the bullying. The bullying is done in such a secret and insidious manner that much damage is done before the target is aware that anything is happening behind their back.

3. It is intended to and/or it does make the target feel intimidated, upset, humiliated and/or threatened.

It is important to note that there is a definite negative intention behind the bullying behavior. The person exhibiting the bullying behavior specifically targets an individual or group with the intention of exerting some sort of power and control over them. The type of power and control utilized by the bully makes the target feel victimized, belittled, intimidated, threatened and/or humiliated.



It must also be noted that in some circumstances an individual may exhibit bullying behavior but insist that their actions have absolutely no negative intentions. An example of this may be the "hard boss" who uses threats or certain forms of intimidation. But they insist that they simply have a "tough management style" and only do so to ensure that their employees perform at their maximum potential. In other words, their intentions are positive, therefore they are not bullies.

But note that we said "it is intended **and/or it does** make the target feel..." Even when the boss' intentions are noble, if his/her actions result in individuals feeling humiliated, threatened or intimidated, and if the boss' behavior also matches the first

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

two criteria, the boss' behavior is bullying! Bullying is defined by the effect of the behavior, not just the intent.

This is not to say that every time a supervisor disciplines an employee or gives them a performance appraisal, their behavior is bullying. Work control and employee performance issues must be addressed by the supervisor – it is their job. So long as this is done in a constructive and objective manner, it is not bullying.

Some typical workplace bullying behaviors include:

- Making unreasonable demands
- Taking credit for another's work
- Blaming others for errors without justification
- Raising false concerns about another
- Unwarranted or invalid criticism
- Threats, insults, put-downs (may be in front of colleagues, face to face, or behind the back of the target)
- Social exclusion or isolation
- Belittling opinions
- Assigning meaningless tasks
- Excessive monitoring
- Abusive, insulting or offensive language
- Interfering with a person's personal effects or work equipment
- Harmful or offensive initiation practices
- Physical assaults or threats of assault

Bullying behavior tends to follow a cyclical pattern.

1. A person is bullied over a period of time.
2. The person being bullied speaks out in some way, and complains about the situation.
3. The bully denies the bullying and often insists that they are, in fact, the victim. (Research shows that 70% of managers come out on the side of the bully!).
4. There is little evidence and often no witnesses, so it is one person's word against the other's.
5. The target of the bullying behavior is viewed as the "problem".
6. Seeing few options, the target leaves or is removed from their position.
7. The bully finds a new target and the cycle begins again.

The Epidemic of Bullying

Bullying in the workplace is widespread, incredibly destructive, and enormously costly to the well-being of individuals and organizations.

The following statistics on the realities of workplace bullying come from a number of recent studies. They leave little doubt that workplace bullying is truly a situation of epidemic proportions.

- Almost 75% of employees have been affected by workplace bullying, either as targets or witnesses.
- Bullying is 4 times more prevalent than illegal, discriminatory harassment.
- For every 1 act of violence in the workplace there are 1600 acts of bullying.
- Most bullies are bosses (72%).
- Most targets are women (57%).
- 62% of employers ignore the problem.
- 45% of targets suffer stress-related health problems.
- 40% of bullied individuals never report it.
- 75% of targets leave their job to stop the bullying.
- Once targeted, a person has a 64% chance of losing their job for no reason.



Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

And what are the costs of bullying? Here are just some of the aspects of bullying that affect the bottom line.

- Distraction from work on the part of the target, the bully, and co-workers
- Reduced psychological safety and an associated climate of fear
- Loss of motivation and energy at work
- Stress induced illnesses
- Absenteeism and turnover
- Time spent at work talking about the bully and/or the target instead of working
- Time spent by management in dealing with the target, the bully, and witnesses
- Time and costs of reorganizing teams and departments in attempts to address bullying
- Workers compensation or disability benefits
- Damage to the company's reputation affecting sales as well as employee recruitment and retention

In 2002, the Orlando Business Journal reported on a study of 9,000 federal workers. Forty-two percent of female and fifteen percent of male respondents reported experiencing bullying-type behaviors over a two-year period. This resulted in a cost of more than \$180 million in lost time and productivity. It is estimated that, between turnover and lost productivity, a bully could cost a Fortune 500 company as much as \$24 million.

Statistics Sources:

Dr. Judy Fisher-Blando's doctoral research dissertation on "Aggressive Behavior: Workplace Bullying and Its Effect on Job Satisfaction and Productivity."

2007 U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey by the Workplace Bullying Institute.

Zogby International Study August 2007.

Types of Bullies

Bullying can take a variety of forms and expressions. There are overt and covert expressions of bullying.

The overt bully is easier to identify because their behavior is out in the open for all to observe. The covert bully is much more difficult to identify and challenge because they tend to prey on their targets in very subtle ways. Co-workers and supervisors alike may be oblivious to its existence unless they have developed a keen sensory skill to observe and analyze behavior patterns.

The overt bully tends to be loud, boisterous and has little regard to the impact of their behavior on other people. They tend to feel justified in their conduct and form a belief that the target deserves the treatment they mete out. When challenged, this type of bully tends to get defensive and blame the target, saying it was because of the target's poor performance or lack of skill that they had to be so "tough" and direct.

The covert bully is one that is difficult to identify because they are behind the scene manipulators. They identify what they perceive are the target's weaknesses and pounce on them through derogatory, undermining, and belittling statements. In some cases the target may not verbally bully the target but rather utilizes covert acts that make the target feel isolated and weak, with little or no support. In many cases these covert bullies work strategically to undermine the target using "passing comments" in regard to their competence, appearance, relationships, and any other "vulnerable" areas that the bullying party perceives will "oppress" the target.



Bullying is about power. Bullies use manipulation and the abuse of power for personal gain and advantage at the expense of the other. The bullying party does not have to have "formal" power over the target, i.e. they do not have to be their boss. Much bullying behavior is exercised between co-workers at level i.e. manager on manager, employee on employee, as well as the classic manager on employee.

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

There are many manifestations of bullying in the workplace. The following types are not exclusive. They can be used in combination. Understanding the type of bully in your midst will help you confront the bullying behavior and create a bully-free workplace.

The Boss Bully

The Boss Bully uses their formal position and power to bully others. This type of bully relies on the fact that they have authority and power in the organization. They use their position to make unreasonable demand on others. They keep reminding the target that they have power and that they will use their power to the detriment of the target unless the target does what the “Boss” expects them to do. As well, the Boss Bully feels that they are invincible and no one can touch them because they are right and justified in their conduct. They demand attention and tend to be careless as to the context of the bullying. They may dress a person down at a meeting, make unreasonable demands, and highlight the target’s weakness in public and assume that their behavior will not be challenged.



The Boss Bully is rarely challenged in the workplace. When they are confronted with their behavior they tend to deny it instantly and get defensive. To minimize their defensiveness, it is not advisable to confront their behavior on the spot or in front of other people. On occasion they may be shocked or surprised by being identified as a bully because they have never contemplated the impact

of their behavior on others.

When challenging the Boss Bully you must bring forth very specific and identifiable incidents where you believe bullying occurred. Speak in “I” language. Do not accuse. Explain the impact of the behavior on you. The motto should be “if you feel bullied express it.” No one can take away your story.

The Expert Bully

The Expert Bully uses their expertise and knowledge of a specific task or area to bully others.

The evolution of the workplace has produced a plethora of so called experts. In many professions there has been an attempt to move away from generalists into specific subject matter experts who specialize in a certain part of the business. Many

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

organizations make this a foundational element of their hiring and retention policy. This is where the Expert Bully thrives. The Expert Bully may not be in a position of authority, but they use their unique knowledge and expertise to blackmail and intimidate colleagues, subordinates and even their bosses. Targets of the Expert Bully tend to be those who they perceive as having inferior knowledge or expertise or those who have knowledge and expertise but are seen as “weak.” Expert Bullies can hold their organization hostage because of the information they have that they were not willing to share. They leave management paralyzed, unable to constructively deal with the situation, because the information the Expert Bully has is critical to the functioning of the organization. The old adage “information is power” is very evident in this situation.

One of the most effective ways to deal with the Expert Bully is to call their bluff. When they threaten to resign and leave the organization “hanging”, or when they claim that no one knows the answer to certain issues or challenges but themselves, the organization must find alternatives for gathering the information the Expert Bully has. Organizations may retain the services of another “expert” to advise them and provide them with the information they require to challenge the expertise of the Expert Bully.

Once the organization is no longer hostage to the knowledge of the Expert Bully, the organization can challenge the impact of the Expert Bully’s behavior on others in the organization. This must be done by an authority figure that has the ability and position to make decisions as to the Expert Bully’s further employment in the organization. While the organization can continue to encourage the expertise of the Expert Bully it is important that they understand that their behavior is also critical to their success and that no one is indispensable. If this message is consistent from various players in the organization, experience has shown that the Expert Bully modifies their behavior to the better.

The Relator Bully

The Relator Bully uses important associations and relationships to bully others. “I know people” is the mantra of the Relator Bully. They use their relationship with others such as influential staff members, leaders, clients, suppliers, etc to exert undue influence on others and in turn bully their way to an outcome that would benefit their position.

When dealing with a Relator Bully make sure that you have as many friends and supportive colleagues as you can reasonably have. Ensure that the Relator Bully is aware of the “connections” that you have. Do not lie or exaggerate your connections, but make sure that you are not seen as isolated and alone.

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

The Aggressive Bully

The Aggressive Bully uses aggression and demands to bully others. The Aggressive Bully is one that has a zero sum mind set. They tend to believe that, for them to win, others have to lose. They do not trust others and see those around them as adversaries not worthy of their trust. They are convinced that no one else could have the Aggressive Bully's best interests at heart. They tend to be louder and aggressive with everyone and focus on those targets that seem to be influenced by their behavior, which is generally a majority of those around them.

Because the Aggressive Bully uses this aggressive pattern so frequently, with so many people, they develop a reputation as simply being "a demanding kind of person."



Consequently, their behavior is dismissed and they are rarely challenged.

This type of bullying is common in very competitive work environments. In fact, the Aggressive Bully may actually be rewarded as a go-getter who gets things done fast. For this reason the Aggressive Bully is difficult to challenge. They are usually supported by their senior managers who either turn a blind eye or believe that their behavior is necessary to get the job done.

One of most effective approaches in dealing with the Aggressive Bully is to first speak to their superiors. Convince their superiors that, while the Aggressive Bully may be getting things done on time, the quality of the work is not what it could be due. The level of innovation and creativity in an environment controlled by an Aggressive Bully is close to nil. Make sure that the Aggressive Bully also understands that their bullying is not getting him/her the best results.

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

The Irritator Bully

The Irritator Bully uses constant questioning or undermining to bully others. The Irritator Bully believes that nuisance works. This type of bullying relies on finding the smallest, most insignificant issues and making larger issues out of them. Irritator Bullies will find a slight mistake someone has made, or remember what someone said in passing that could have a negative impact on another. They then proceed to inform others of the mistake or slight, insisting on its significance. They see themselves as the office police. They tend to be nose-y, making everyone's business their business. They are generally the main source of gossip in the workplace.

One of the most effective ways to deal with the Irritator Bully is transparency. If you make a small mistake, admit it and own it. If you hurt a colleague's feelings, apologize. If someone in the workplace does or says something that irritates you, approach them and explain yourself. As you and others in the organization do this it will minimize the Irritator Bully's power and influence. It is then possible for the Irritator Bully's boss to call them on their behavior and set clear guidelines and rules for him or her to follow.

The Moralistic Bully

The Moralistic Bully uses moral authority to bully others. The Moralistic Bully takes the stance that "the truth is on my side." In some cases the Moralistic Bully might even say "God is on my side." The Moralistic Bully is one who knows what is best for everyone. They will confront colleagues who, they believe, are not living up to acceptable moral values in the work and/or in their personal lives. They may preach "family values" or some other values to which they espouse. Even those who may share some of the Moralistic Bully's values can feel bullied by their approach.

Some Moralistic Bullies believe that it is their responsibility to protect everyone who they deem needs protecting. The Moralistic Bully doesn't actually ask the "needy" individual if they need or want any assistance or help. They just make the assumption that they do and proceed to "smother" them with attention. The Moralistic Bully will speak on their behalf and provide solutions to the "needy" individual's perceived problems.

The Moralistic Bully needs to be given boundaries. Don't argue with them about their moral standing or issues because they are not up for negotiation. What can be addressed is how they share their beliefs.

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

The Moralistic Bully, when confronted, will cite their good intentions and clean heart. When challenging their behavior you must be clear that you are not judging their morals and values but rather the manner by which they share their views in the workplace.

Are You a Bully?

Many bullies are unaware that they are bullies. So it is important to ask the question “Are you a bully?”

There are many reasons why bullies become bullies. Unresolved issues such as insecurity, anger, and feelings of powerlessness can result in an overwhelming need to exert power and control in a negative way. Many bullies have, themselves, been targets of bullying and simply believe that this is “the way the world works.” They may not have any role-models for more positive behavior.

Bullies generally believe that they are justified in “asserting” themselves because the target is either weak, deserving of the behavior, or even caused it in the first place.

While it may take some time for a bully to understand why or how they came to use bullying behavior, the first step is recognizing their behavior for what it is.



Below is a questionnaire designed to identify if you are exhibiting bullying behavior. Consider the questions and answer with a “yes” or a “no.”

	Question	Yes	No
1.	Do you blame others when things go wrong?		
2.	Do you call people names/nicknames?		

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

3.	Do you enjoy confronting people at work?		
4.	Do you ever make people cry because of something you say or do?		
5.	Do you ever intentionally not invite someone for an office activity or event?		
6.	Do you ever recall working for a bully boss?		
7.	Do you ever threaten, intimidate or scare others?		
8.	Do you ever use your position to get others to do a task?		
9.	Do you feel the need to control or manage all work being done on your team?		
10.	Do you feel threatened if an employee wants your job?		
11.	Do you find it difficult to trust others?		
12.	Do you generally express annoyance with waiters, drivers, store clerks, etc.?		
13.	Do you get annoyed or jealous when a colleague or a subordinate succeeds?		

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

14.	Do you like to tease others?		
15.	Do you notice that others seem upset by things you say or do?		
16.	Do you supervise employees closely (micromanage)?		
17.	Do you want others to think you're tough?		
18.	Do you yell at work?		

These questions are critical in assessing yourself when it comes to bullying. How many “yes” answers did you have?

If you answered “yes” to at least 3 questions stop and take a look at yourself and your actions. Examine the situations and events when you may have utilized certain bullying tactics. Was it a one-time event? Something that happened a long time ago? You probably aren't a bully but you may need to be more careful in addressing others and dealing with your frustration.

If you answered “yes” to 6-11 questions you need to examine your behavior patterns. Watch yourself when dealing and working with others. There is a real possibility that you are a bully in the making.

If you answered “yes” to 12 or more questions, you are exhibiting bullying behavior. Speak to a professional to help you untangle your bullying behavior. Find out what causes and triggers your behavior and find new ways of interacting with others in the workplace.

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

Turn bullying into effective leadership

It is possible to shift from the adversarial behavior of a bully to the collaborative problem-solving behavior of an effective leader. The secret is to LISTEN – THINK – ACT.

If you are inclined to bullying behavior, it is imperative that you listen first, think second, and act third. Listen to yourself, your values, principles, needs, wants, and expectations. Listen to what others are saying to you. Hear what their values, needs and expectations are. Then take time to reflect and think about what and how you should respond and deal with the other. Reflect on the outcome you want, the impact you are looking for. When considering your actions, ask yourself how it will reflect on you. Will it give you the desired result? If you have listened to yourself and others first, considered your options and the consequences of your actions second, and then acted upon your choices third, you will achieve the results you want. You will make reasoned and respectful decisions. Your actions will be perceived as measured and well thought out. You will become more effective in your interactions in the workplace.

Make The Change!

LISTEN

Shift from Haste to Calm: Restrain yourself and take a step back.

Shift from Terse to Listener: Find time to sit down and listen to others, no matter how busy you are.

THINK:

Shift from Reactive to Proactive: Just because you've been bullied, doesn't mean you have the right to make unreasonable demands on those down the line.

Shift from Judger to Communicator When someone challenges you, think about what they have to say, make a note of it and don't give an answer right away.

ACT:

Shift from Isolator to Engager: When you organize an activity in the workplace, make sure everyone is involved. Try and encourage everyone to attend.

Shift from Intimidation to Fairness: Make your point firmly without intimidating or frightening others.

What to Do if You are Being Bullied

There are two aspects to dealing with being the target of bullying – one is external, the other is internal. First, you must make it stop (external) and then you must address the emotional impact (internal).

You Must Make it Stop

This may seem self-evident but, in fact, it isn't always easy to put a stop to bullying if you are a target.

Some bullies hide their actions from the target. A bully may talk behind the target's back, telling others of his/her "concern" over the target's poor performance, or may spread rumors that are humiliating to the target. The target may not initially be aware of what is happening and so is unable to address it.

In other instances, the target may feel powerless to address the bullying – concerned that he/she might lose a job or be painted as a discontent. In still other circumstances, the bullying may have escalated over time, leaving the target with the feeling that this is "just how things are" with little or no hope for change.



But, in order for it to be stopped, the bullying behavior must be acknowledged, identified and addressed. In other words, the target has to say "stop!" Bullying is a pattern of behavior that will not end on its own. Don't expect a bully to suddenly reconsider his/her behavior and make a change. If the behavior is not challenged, bullies don't change. Why would they? If they are not challenged, they assume passive acceptance, even encouragement, of their bullying behavior.

If you are able, it is most effective to confront a bully directly. There are several things to keep in mind if you do so. Most importantly, stay calm. Practice in advance what you plan to say and how you'll say it. That way, you'll stay in control – of your emotions and of the interaction. If you are not in control of your emotions there are two

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

things that could happen – you might yell and threaten or you might cry. In either case, the bully can interpret this as a sign of weakness and can use your actions to his/her advantage.

Another thing to keep in mind when confronting a bully is to focus on the behavior rather than the person. Starting a confrontation with, “You’re a bully! You’re always attacking me for no reason!” can sound accusatory and bullying in its own right and quickly escalates the interaction.

But focusing on the behavior (“When you say things like that...”) and the consequences of the behavior (“...I feel put down unfairly...”) and then insisting on its stopping (“... and I refuse to be bullied any longer.”) clearly states that you want the behavior to change. While the bully may not immediately stop bullying, you have not escalated the interaction, you have been clear and reasonable, and you have clearly identified your expectations. The bully can no longer say he/she wasn’t aware of the impact of his/her actions or that it seemed acceptable to everyone!

There are situations when it is impossible to confront the bully directly. In such situations, find the appropriate person (someone with authority of the bully such as his/her boss or HR) and report the situation. Again, it is important to remain calm and be as factual as possible. Since bullying is a pattern of behavior, make sure you clearly explain what that pattern has been and how it has affected you. You will also want to report the behavior to someone in a position of authority if you have already confronted the bully and the bullying hasn’t stopped.

When reporting bullying, it is most effective if you can cite specific incidences with sufficient detail so that your report can be corroborated. If you are the target of bullying, document incidences when you felt bullied. Identify witnesses if there were any. Again, make sure that you clearly identify a **pattern** of behavior.

Bullying can have a devastating effect on the target that may continue even when the bullying has ended. As important as it is for the target to identify the bullying and demand it be stopped (external) it is as important for the target to deal with the personal repercussions of the bullying (internal).

Address the Emotional Impact

Even the strongest individual can be affected by bullying. It is common to have self-doubt and/or feelings of isolation and insecurity if you have been the target of bullying. Many targets report wondering if there was some basis to the bullying, if they

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

deserved it somehow, or if there was some reason they were seen as weak and vulnerable.

Remember that bullying is about the bully and the behavior he/she is exhibiting. It's not about the target. Keep in mind:

- 1. If it hadn't been you, it would have been someone else! That's what bullies do. They pick a target and start bullying.**
- 2. Bullying is about power and control. Therefore it really has nothing to do with you or your performance. Don't give the bully power and control over your feelings about yourself!**
- 3. No one deserves to be treated disrespectfully. There is nothing that you could do that would warrant being bullied in the workplace. You, like everyone else, deserve to work in a safe work environment and to be treated with respect. Bullying is never okay!**

You may need to remind yourself of these things on occasion. Rely on family and friends for encouragement and support. It is important that, as a target of bullying, you not allow yourself to get mired in a "victim mentality." Doing so allows the bullying to continue. Validate yourself and your self worth and you won't let the bully win!

Here are some additional tips for targets of bullying:

Keep doing your job and do it well. Focus on your work while on the job. This has a number of benefits. It will keep you occupied and distracted so that you are less likely to obsess about the bullying and less likely to get caught up in a victim mentality. Secondly, when you continue producing and focusing on your work, you are proving the bully wrong. It will be readily apparent to others that the bully is fabricating criticisms.

Don't become a bully yourself. A number of supposed "authorities" on bullying advocate fighting fire with fire. In the workplace this doesn't work. It only succeeds in bringing you down to the bully's level. Even if the bully is the boss, don't accept it as simply "the way of doing business." The old saying applies here – "An eye for an eye only results in making both parties blind."

Keep lines of communication with supervisors open. It is important that you keep all lines of communication that are available to you as open as possible. If the bully is your boss, maintain lines of communication with his/her superiors and HR. Certainly this will provide you with avenues to report bullying behavior. But equally important, it keeps others aware of what you're doing and the quality of your work. Often bullies are

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

spreading negative rumors but they will be less believable if the boss knows about the good work you're doing.

When do you quit?

Statistics indicate that a significant number of targets choose to leave their job in order to get away from the bullying. There are two significant downsides to quitting – it leaves the bullying behavior unaddressed so the bully is free to continue his/her behavior. And it leaves emotional scars (“he/she destroyed my career.”) resulting in ongoing victim mentality for the target. In order for bullying in the workplace to be stopped, targets can't continue to simply leave in silence.

There is, in our opinion, one significant exception. In small to medium size companies where the boss/owner is a bully, quitting is likely the right approach. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, in this type of organization, the boss/owner doesn't have a “superior” to answer to so it is extremely difficult to hold them to any kind of accountability for their behavior. Secondly, businesses run by bullies rarely succeed. They don't draw the best employees and they don't foster customer loyalty. So you won't be doing yourself or your career any favor by staying.

If you are a target of bullying, you are the only one who can judge if you **need** to leave in order to minimize the stress. But know that it is not a hopeless situation – there are options for dealing with bullies. There is hope.

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

Developing a safe and respectful work environment for all employees should be a top priority for all organizations. It's good for business. When employees are satisfied with their work environment they are more productive, innovative and loyal. So, not only will they get more work done – they'll do it better. Additionally, a positive work environment enhances the reputation of the organization – attracting both clients and top employees. People will want to work for your organization and do business with you. So, creating a bully-free workplace will impact the company's bottom line. You can't afford not to do it!

In order to create a bully-free workplace it is important to first understand the type of work environment that increases the risk of bullying and may even encourage bullying. Make sure that your organization minimizes the risks of creating a work environment that allows bullying to thrive.

There are a number of things that organizations must do in order to create a bully-free workplace.

1. Develop a bullying policy.

By now, most companies have a harassment policy and many assume that any bullying issues are covered by this policy. This is not necessarily the case. Bullying and harassment are not the same. If you rely on your harassment policy to deal with bullying issues you may find yourself stuck on loopholes and technicalities. Develop a policy that provides a clear definition

Bullying Thrives When Organizations Have:

- *Significant organizational change*
- *Lack of employee participation in decisions*
- *Inadequate information flow*
- *Lack of policies around workplace behavior*
- *Competitive environments that focuses only on outcomes*
- *High intensity work with high performance expectations*
- *Staff shortages*
- *Authoritarian management styles at the top*
- *Excessive workloads*

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

of bullying and identifies specific steps that employees and supervisors can take in order to deal with bullying behavior.

2. Ensure that there is a process for reporting incidences of bullying that doesn't further victimize the target.

Reporting incidences of bullying is difficult. In fact, 40% of bullied individuals never report it. Generally, this is either because the target is concerned about retaliation or lack of action on the part of the company. If you want people to report incidences of bullying so that they can be dealt with appropriately, you must ensure that those who report it will not experience further bullying by doing so.

3. Take complaints of bullying seriously.

Unfortunately, some complaints of bullying may initially sound insignificant or petty. It is important to really listen to what the complainant is saying. Ask questions to determine if bullying has taken place. Ask questions such as: How frequently or over what time period has this behavior occurred? Who has experienced/witnessed this behavior? What has been the result of this behavior?

And don't wait for a formal complaint to be submitted before you start checking it out. Any rumors, innuendos, or signs of bullying must be explored to determine what's going on – and it needs to be addressed quickly. This sends the message to all employees that the organization takes issues of bullying seriously and that it is committed to creating a bully-free workplace.

4. Develop awareness throughout the organization on what bullying is and what can be done to prevent it and address it.

It's important to have a bullying policy but it is equally important that all employees know and understand what that policy is. Make sure that all staff knows what behaviors the company defines as bullying as well as the company's commitment to creating a bully-free workplace. Clearly identify options available to targets of bullying.

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

5. Provide staff and management with skills and support to challenge bullying behavior.

It's not easy to confront a bully. And it can backfire if you are not entirely prepared and don't have the proper communication skills. In fact, you run the risk of further escalating the bullying if you simply encourage employees to challenge bullying behavior without providing them with the skills they need to do so. Employees and managers need to know what to expect when confronting a bully, how to focus on the bullying behavior, and how to insist on and monitor change.

Anyone who challenges bullying behavior in the workplace also needs to know that they are supported by their organization. They need to know that their concerns will be taken seriously, that they will not experience retaliation, and that there will be consequences for the bullying behavior.

6. Provide support for the target of bullying.

Bullying can have a significant psychological and physical effect on the target. This may include a variety of stress induced illnesses and symptoms. The target may have experienced bullying for a significant period of time, resulting in self-doubt about his/her own abilities, value to the organization, etc. Reassurance and support may be required in order for the target to get back to optimum work performance.

7. Provide assistance to the bully to change and modify behavior.

When confronting bullies about their behavior, it is important to give them an opportunity to change. Of course, there are exceptions. If the bullying has escalated to the extreme of physical violence, this becomes an issue for police and legal authorities to deal with. But, for most bullying situations, it is appropriate to provide coaching or counseling to the bully as well as the target of the bullying. Through processes such as coaching or counseling, the bully can explore the causes for his/her behavior and develop new and more effective workplace behaviors.

Follow-up is an important aspect of the behavior modification process. Many bullies will be resistant to change or may modify their behavior for a short period after being "caught" but then revert back to their old ways. Individuals who have

Creating a Bully-Free Workplace

exhibited bullying behavior must be monitored over an extended period of time to ensure true behavioral change.

8. Demonstrate the organization's commitment to creating a bully-free work environment.

Organizational leaders and top executives need to be role models. An organization can never effectively address bullying amongst the employees if some members of Senior Management are themselves perceived as bullies. The kind of behavior expected of all employees needs to be demonstrated from the top down.

9. Focus on both on-the-job behaviors and achievement of outcomes when evaluating performance.

Some companies will turn a blind eye to how employees achieve results so long as those results meet or exceed expectations. This is frequently an indication to the bully that his/her actions are justified because the company only looks at results. And many organizations hesitate to reprimand or discipline high-performing bullies because they are afraid of losing their top performer.

Companies need to keep their eye on the bigger picture when it comes to bullying. Bullying in the workplace results in an atmosphere of fear and negativity. No one works to their maximum potential in this kind of environment. If the bully manager is getting good results from employees, then a motivating and encouraging manager will get exceptional results from those employees. Creating a bully-free workplace is truly good for business.

10. Conduct Workplace Assessments.

Know what's going on in your organization, what employees are thinking, how satisfied they are with their work environment. Look for patterns of sick and stress leave, turnover, and workplace conflicts. All of these may be indicators of workplace bullying. Remember, almost half of employees who experience bullying don't report it. So if you want to create a bully-free workplace, you need to remain vigilant in your awareness that it can and does happen. Look for it and address it.

11. Screen New Employees

Prevention is, of course, the most effective way to create a bully-free workplace. When you are hiring new employees it is as important to look at their history of workplace relationships as their achievements. It is as important that their management style fits your company's commitment to being bully-free as that their sales numbers will help your bottom line.

Bully-proof your workplace!

The Centre for Conflict Resolution International has the expertise to help you create a bully-free workplace.

We are pleased to offer the following services:

- *Training*
- *Coaching*
- *Workplace Assessments*
- *Policy Development Consulting*

Contact us today to find out more:

www.ccrinternational.com

888-421-7822 or 613-239-3127