



Workplace Bullying: A Silent Epidemic



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Although most people tend to think about children and young adults when they hear the term bullying, there is actually a bullying epidemic amongst adults in the workplace. At one point or another, you've probably come across colleagues who tear each other down rather than build each other up.

Bullying leads to a negative, toxic work environment. It becomes an unbearable environment that zaps employees' energy and positivity and distracts all employees, including the bully, who's more focused on putting his or her colleague down than working.

What can workplace bullying look like?

- ✎ Taking away responsibility from someone or replacing it with more unpleasant tasks
- ✎ Ignoring and belittling someone's opinions
- ✎ Persistently criticising and undermining someone's work
- ✎ Spreading gossip or rumours about someone

- ✎ Ignoring or excluding someone at work
- ✎ Hinting to someone that they should quit their job
- ✎ Excluding or isolating someone socially
- ✎ Intimidating a person
- ✎ Withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information
- ✎ Making jokes (verbally or written) that are obviously offensive
- ✎ Intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking
- ✎ Yelling or using profanity

What are the main causes of workplace bullying?

Most people assume that the targets of bullies are weak. On the contrary, bullies in the workplace often will choose a competent, successful, dedicated staff member who is liked by their managers and colleagues, is trustworthy and doesn't engage in gossiping. The bully considers the high performance of others at work a threat, so they start to bully in an attempt to hide their own incompetency, inadequacy and insecurity.

How can bullying affect an employee?

- Shock
- Anger
- Frustration
- Anxiety
- Loss of self esteem
- Inability to concentrate
- Family tension and stress
- Low morality and productivity
- Stomach pain, headaches

How can bullying affect the workplace?

- Promote absenteeism
- Increased turnover
- Increased stress
- Gossiping, rumours
- Lower productivity and motivation
- Decreased morale
- Reduced professionalism
- Create a hostile work environment



How can my company/organisation prevent and deal with workplace bullying?

Bullying is a serious issue that can't be ignored and can't be solved unless dealt with properly. Not taking action sends the message to your staff that aggressive, abusive, offensive behaviour is acceptable at your workplace. This encourages bullies and can prompt others to seek employment elsewhere. Here are steps you can take:

- Publishing an anti-bullying policy and distributing it to all employees
- Treating complaints about bullying seriously and strictly





- Clearly defining jobs and providing workers with the resources, information and training they need to carry out their responsibilities
Implementing workplace bullying reporting and response procedures
- Providing awareness training for managers and staff about bullying and a healthy workplace environment
- Handling inappropriate behaviours before they escalate
- Addressing the problem with the bully, working on a development plan and guiding them in feeling more secure at work

What can I do as a victim of workplace bullying?

- Checking if your workplace has a bullying policy and reporting procedure you can follow. The policy should outline how your organisation will prevent and respond to workplace bullying
- If you feel comfortable and safe, confronting the bully and telling them to stop and that their behaviour has a negative impact on you and the workplace
- Seeking advice from your manager, supervisor, staff care, Human Resources or a colleague you trust at work
- Officially reporting it and asking for immediate action. If not dealt with, workplace bullying usually escalates and will lead to negative outcomes for you and the workplace as a whole

