Understanding Bullying

There is overwhelming evidence that the higher the level of self-esteem, the more likely one will be to treat others with respect, kindness, and generosity.
–Nathaniel Branden, psychotherapist and philosopher

Top Ten Bullying Tactics

1. Blame for “errors”
2. Unreasonable job demands
3. Criticism of ability
4. Inconsistent compliance with rules
5. Threatens job loss
6. Insults and put-downs
7. Discounting/denial of accomplishments
8. Exclusion, “icing out”
9. Yelling, screaming
10. Stealing Credit

Bully Categories

Constant Critic

Two-Headed Snake
Passive-aggressive indirect. Pretends to be nice while sabotaging you. Plays favorites. Makes nasty, rude, hostile remarks to Target while putting on a rational “face” for others, breaches confidentiality. Manages image of the Target in other people’s minds.

Gatekeeper
Most transparent of the controllers. Establishes herself as “one up” on you. Controls all resources (time, supplies, praise, approval, money, staffing help). Micro-manages. Cuts the Target out of the communication loop. Denies rights and protections. Silent treatment.

Screaming Mimi
TARGETS, NOT VICTIMS!

Bullies select Targets to harm. Victimhood begets powerlessness, helplessness, and an inability to change matters for the better. Consider yourself a target, not a victim.

- 81% of bullies are bosses.
- Targets are Everywoman, Everyman. 21% of Targets hold a graduate or professional degree while 63% have some college or a college degree.
- Employers are divided between private sector business, large and small (50%), 33% in government, and 19% nonprofit organizations.

Who Are the Targets?

Independent, Skilled, and Bright People
Number 1 Reason for Being Bullied: Target’s refusal to be subservient, to not go along with being controlled (reported by 58% of respondents)

Number 2 Reason for Being Bullied: Bully envies the Target’s superior competence (reported by 56% of respondents)

Cooperative, Nice People
Number 3 Reason for Being Bullied: Bully envies Target’s social skills, being liked, and positive attitude (reported by 49% of respondents)

Ethical, Just, and Fair People:
Number 4 Reason for Being Bullied: Ethical, whistleblower-type behavior (46% reported). Those in power often silence the ethical voice.

Ironic Reality: Failing to confront costs a procrastinating Target and family more than the worst imagined consequence.

Information from research by the Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute
BULLYING CAN BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH!

THE MANY FACES OF HURT

- Poor concentration, forgetfulness
- Loss of sleep, fatigue
- Stress, irritability
- Mood swings, bursts of anger
- Spontaneous crying, lost sense of humor
- Indecisiveness
- Panic attacks, anxiety
- Clinical depression
- Feelings of insecurity, being out of control
- Nightmares about the bully
- Obsessive thinking about the bully
- Always anticipating the next attack (hyper-vigilance)
- Shattered faith in self-competence, feelings of worthlessness
- Shame, embarrassment, and guilt
- Self-destructive habits: Substance abuse, work holism
- Altered personality, unrecognizable to family & friends
- PDSD/PTSD (stress disorders)
- Suicidal thoughts
- Violence: suicide or violence against others

PHYSICAL HEALTH DAMAGE

- Reduced immunity to infection: more colds, flu
- Menstrual difficulties
- Itching, skin disorders
- Stress headaches
- Increased allergies, asthma
- Indigestion, colitis, irritable bowel syndrome
- Rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia
- Hair loss
- Weight swings
- Hyperthyroidism: overactive thyroid gland
- Migraine headaches
- Hypertension: high blood pressure
- Diabetes mellitus
- Peptic ulcers
- Heart palpitations
- Heart attack
- Micro-shedding: weakened heart

From the Bully at Work, Gary Namie, PhD & Ruth Namie, PhD, 2003; Sourcebooks, Inc.
BULLIES IN THE WORKPLACE
What to do if you have been a Target........

Understand
Bullying is the deliberate, hurtful and repeated mistreatment of a target.

Know
Bullying is rarely illegal if unrelated to gender, race, age or any other protections under the Civil Rights Act.

Realize
You might be in denial. Many Targets develop self denial when being bullied. When we are hurt and feel vulnerable, we want the pain to stop. This works in the short term but postpones identifying and addressing the intolerable mistreatment.

Alleviate the Pain
Take care of yourself. Eat healthy, stay physically active, and avoid stimulants. Create a journal. Talk to friends, family or clergy about the problem. Don’t hesitate to seek out medical care or counseling.

See the irony
Failing to confront costs more than the worst imagined consequences of confronting the bully. Emotional and physiological effects of bullying can be very serious to your health. The greater the severity of psychological pain, the more dangerous and the longer the effects last.

Act!
Action is the antidote.

1. Confront the Bully.  Read Bully Proof Yourself At Work by Gary Namie, Ph.D. and Ruth Namie, Ph.D.

2. Determine if there are other Targets in your workplace and consider a Solidarity Action. Contact your Union Steward to find out more.

Take Back Your Power!
Solidarity Tactics

Respect and Dignity Buttons
   Come up with your own slogan or simply “Dignity in the Workplace”
Humming and singing songs
   Make up a song to a familiar tune. Whenever the bully acts up, everyone starts humming the tune.
Coffee Break with the Bully
   Take turns making cookies and having coffee with the bully
Showing support for the Target(s)
   When the bully picks on a target, everyone find ways to show support.
      Bring her coffee or a piece of candy.
      Offer to do one of her jobs for her.
      Take her to lunch.
Forming strong social groups
   Start chatting with each other about everyday stuff.
      Do things together.
      Go to lunch together.
      Do coffee together.
Refusing to engage in divisive tactics: No gossip, backstabbing or secrets
Wearing Union buttons
“Happy” Days
   Everyone is happy about everything that happens!
Having other union members visit your workplace
   Ask the Local Union Leadership to stop and visit with people
Wearing green and other visibility techniques/props
   Union Coffee cups, Union Posters, Union clothing.
Demonstrations of Solidarity
   Huddle in the workplace
   Stand up and all hold hands
   Sing Solidarity Forever
Rest of the Union members wearing button of support for the Targets
Flower Power – bringing flowers and moving them to the most recent target
Laugh ins – periodic laughter by all
Unified responses to the Bully
   “Why are you treating me with such disrespect?”
Petitions
Pledge of Respect
Bully Free Zones
ACTION IS THE ANTIDOTE

Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising which tempt you to believe that your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to the end, requires some of the same courage which a soldier needs. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Consider the following:

- When asked what they would have done differently, veterans of bullying wars said, in their own words:
  - I would have challenged the bully more and stood up for my own beliefs instead of backing down.
  - Take a stand and get the help you need to confront the bully because you wouldn’t have a bully on your back if there were more people on your side.
  - Fight back from the beginning
  - Realize that the bully is really a coward

- How real is risk? Guaranteed misery vs. a chance for peace of mind.

- To thrive, bullies require secrecy, shame, silent witnesses. You can stop them by cutting off their life support.

- If you are not the Target today, you might be tomorrow

- Maltreatment is guaranteed if nothing is done to stop the bully

- We are a Union, we stick together

- We must fight back to be able to move on with dignity intact

You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face...You must do the thing you think you cannot do. – Eleanor Roosevelt

Freedom is the will to be responsible to ourselves ---Friedrich Nietzsche
Workplace Bullying Resources

Websites
The Workplace Bullying Institute
“WBI is the only United States organization dedicated to the eradication of workplace bullying that combines help for individuals, research, public education, consulting for employers, and legislative advocacy.”

Books
The Bully at Work, 2nd edition - New June, 2009
What You Can Do to Stop the Hurt and Reclaim Your Dignity On the Job
Completely re-written
Gary Namie & Ruth Namie

The No Asshole Rule
Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One That Isn’t.
Robert I. Sutton

Can They Do That?
Retaking Our Fundamental Rights in the Workplace
Lewis Maltby

Stalking the Soul
Emotional Abuse and the Erosion of Identity
Marie-France Hirigoyen

Brutal Bosses and Their Prey
How to Identify and Overcome Abuse in the Workplace
Harvey A. Hornstein, PhD

Workplace Bullying
The Costly Business Secret
Andrea W. Needham

Bully Blind
Inspired by True Stories
Pat Swan

Don’t Take Shit from Hyenas in the Workplace
Reclaim Your Dignity
Susan Steinman

Mobbing
Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace
Noa Davenport, Ruth D. Schwartz & Gail Pursell Elliott