

news & notes

BULLY BE GONE

More than one in four American workers is either currently being bullied at work or has been bullied at work in the past, according to the Workplace Bullying Institute's *2014 Workplace Bullying Survey* (www.workplacebullying.org/wbiresearch/wbi-2014-us-survey).

Unfortunately, the survey also found that in most cases where the problem was solved, it wasn't solved by dealing with the bully. Instead, the target of the bullying either quit or was fired, transferred, or otherwise forced out.

Another survey, conducted by the Center for Aggression Management, found one employer was losing 4.8 workdays per worker per year to workers who called in sick because they didn't want to face a bully.

Even in the absence of physical violence, bullying is a form of aggression and abuse and is still considered workplace violence. In some cases, it may also fall under antidiscrimination laws (for example, sexual harassment laws).



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Bullish on bullying in the workplace *What you need to know*

Workplace bullying is a form of workplace violence and may resemble other forms of abuse, including domestic violence. Have you been targeted by the office bully? Maybe so, if any of the behaviors below sound familiar to you:

- **Verbal abuse.** Bullies may scream or swear, call their victims names, or constantly criticize or threaten them.
- **Hostility.** Bullies may use threatening, intimidating, or cruel behaviors toward victims. They may give their victims dangerous work assignments, steal from their victims, or even plant evidence of crime (such as illegal drugs) in the victim's desk or car.
- **Deliberate humiliation.** Bullies may set their victims up for public humiliation—for example, by calling their victim into a meeting and then doing something that embarrasses the victim.
- **Malicious actions.** More than 70 percent of bullies are bosses. They may use their position to give victims an undeserved poor performance review; deny them advancement, benefits, or perquisites; or steal credit for their work.
- **Interference.** Bullies may sabotage their victims by destroying or damaging their work—for example, by deleting important computer files or reports or not providing information that their victims need to do their jobs.
- **Isolation tactics.** Like domestic abusers, bullies may isolate their victims from others—for example, by excluding victims from important meetings or social networking opportunities or by spreading damaging rumors and then recruiting gullible coworkers to give their victims "the silent treatment" or otherwise ostracize their victim.

If you've been victimized by a bully, report the abusive or aggressive behavior, because this behavior:

- **May be illegal.** Workplace bullying is not generally illegal, but if it crosses a line into physical or sexual harassment, or involves a member of a protected group, laws may apply.
- **Violates company policy.** Even when a bully's behavior violates no law, it violates company policy. Consequences for bullying behavior are outlined in our company's violence prevention and antiharassment policies.
- **Will be investigated.** Complaints about bullying behavior will be thoroughly investigated, and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

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ALCOHOL ABUSE AT WORK

Some 15 million full-time American workers are heavy drinkers of alcohol. Here are more sobering facts about the impact of alcohol at work:

- Workers with alcohol problems were 2.7 times more likely than other employees to have injury-related absences.
- Among patients with an occupational injury treated in emergency rooms, 35 percent were at-risk drinkers.
- About 20 percent of workers and managers say a coworker's drinking has jeopardized their own safety and productivity.

For more information, contact the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) at www.NCADD.org or the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at www.samhsa.gov.



September is Recovery Month

Recognize and respond to substance abuse

Sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (www.samhsa.gov), National Recovery Month (www.recoverymonth.gov) seeks “to increase awareness and understanding of mental and substance use issues and celebrate the people who recover.” This article focuses on alcohol abuse.

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) says heavy drinkers are frequently absent from work, suffer from diverse health problems, and are at greater risk of causing injuries. Other problems include the potential for falling asleep on the job, poor decision-making, and morale issues. Learn to recognize these signs of alcohol problems—in yourself or in others:

- Inconsistent work quality;
- Poor concentration and lack of focus;
- Lowered productivity or erratic work patterns;
- Unexplained disappearances from the jobsite;
- Carelessness, mistakes, or errors in judgment;
- Needless risk taking;
- Disregard for personal and coworker safety;
- Extended lunch periods and early departures;
- Frequent financial problems;
- Blaming others for problems and shortcomings; *and*
- Deterioration in personal appearance or hygiene.

If you notice these signs, seek help from appropriate sources, including your organization's employee assistance program (EAP).

Time to talk

Learn how to have tough conversations

Andrea J. Lee, founder of Thought Partners International (www.thoughtpartners.com) and author of *We Need to Talk* (Thought Partners International, June 2015), says having difficult conversations improves the health and productivity of all involved due to stress relief. It frees up energy to be creative and reframes the negative emotions by changing their meaning. Here are some of the practical recommendations from her book:

- **Stop this meeting!** Ever been in an unproductive meeting or even just a stupefyingly dull one? Stopping a meeting and questioning its purpose is one of the most far-fetched things you can do, and it immediately opens things up. Becoming the person who is able to speak up and tell the truth empowers the one speaking up and everyone else in the room to be able to say what needs to be said. Change is possible when people speak up.
- **Say “no” more often.** Everyone can become better at challenging business conversations, and it can start by finding your positive “no”. We need to say no more often. We get overwhelmed by saying yes to too many things. (Some of the yeses become no s anyway, so we may as well say no from the beginning.) Ask yourself why you're saying no. Find the yes behind the no—and you empower your no.
- **Give emotions their proper place.** A lot of conversations don't happen because we're afraid of our emotions. Breaking up with a business partner, firing that nasty client, or standing up and charging your worth, these are high-stakes actions. Instead of fearing your emotions, let them fuel you. Think of them as “courage vitamins.”