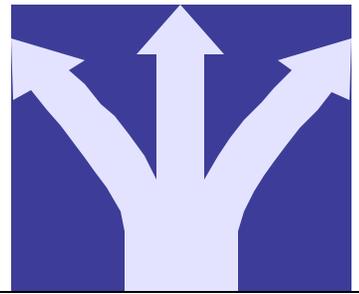


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WORKPLACE BULLYING- Part II

In the last issue of our newsletter, we took a look at the dynamic of workplace bullying. We offered a definition of bullying at work and how it is exhibited. The article also discussed the prevalence and demographics of bullying in the workplace. We mentioned a survey that was done that noted that **1 in 6** U.S. workers had experienced bullying in the workplace in the past year that the survey was completed. This issue of the Outlook Associates newsletter will look at the cost to business of workplace bullying and how individuals and companies can address an individual's bullying behavior.

Bullies are Expensive

How much will it cost a workplace in lost productivity if workers are thinking about how they are being victimized or what will happen to them in their next interaction with the department bully. There may be absenteeism resulting from time taken off by harassed employees.

Another cost of workplace bullying is high turnover. According to Gary Namie, PhD, founder of the Campaign Against Workplace Bullying who has done some research into the matter, 75% of people targeted by a bully leave their workplace: 38% for their health and 44% because they were victims of a performance appraisal system that was manipulated to show them as incompetent. Human resource professionals estimate that the cost of replacing an employee is two to three times that person's salary.

Additionally, a company's health care costs may increase. The target of another person's bullying behavior may become affected by stress-related illnesses. As noted by Dr. Namie in his work, 41% of bully targets become depressed, with 31% of women

and 21% of targeted men being diagnosed with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Victims of bullying may experience headaches, fatigue, sleep pattern disturbances, stomach aches and chronic pain.

Individual Response to Bullying Behavior

According to individuals who have dealt with this issue, the best defense against bullying is taking action to warn the perpetrator that his or her behavior is not acceptable. The person who is the target of bullying behavior should warn the other person preferably in writing about the specific behavior that is bothersome. A copy of any note should be sent to the bully's supervisor, upper management or human resources department. An individual who is the victim of bullying behavior may be reluctant to take this action. He/she may believe that it will only escalate the problem. However, letting others in the company know what is occurring will frequently stop the unwanted behavior since the person who is engaging in the bullying behavior is put on notice that others may be monitoring any interactions. Another important step would be for the person who is being targeted by the workplace bully to avoid any one-on-one meetings with that person.

If these actions fail and the company seems unwilling to take action to stop the bullying behavior, the person may wish to consider seeking advice from an attorney.

Workplace Response to Bullying Behavior

Often workplace bullying is tolerated by a company or organization's culture and may be ignored by upper management. The lack of attention as already noted can lead to significant economic losses as well as legal liability. Section 5a of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration's regulations require employers to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all employees known as the

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“general duty” clause. Employers could be held potentially liable for situations where it was proven that threats and other behavior by an individual “bully” constituted a workplace hazard.

Jane Middleton-Moz and Mary Lee Zawadski in their book *Bullies, From the Playground to the Boardroom, Strategies for Survival* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 2002) outline a number of steps that companies can take to prevent and minimize workplace bullying. They include:

1. Comprehensive anti-harassment policies that encompass bullying-type behavior. There should be a description of bullying behavior, clear grievance policies and procedures that prohibit retaliation against individuals filing legitimate complaints and clearly written consequences for persons who have engaged in bullying behavior including referral for treatment.
2. Training for all employees including managers and supervisors on bullying behavior, its effects and early warning signs in organizations.
3. Supervisors and managers should be trained in effective management styles that encourage open communication, team work and effective conflict resolution.

While persons who engage in bullying need to be held accountable for their behavior, it would also be important to consider whether mental health counseling/therapy or professional coaching might be helpful for the individual. An individual’s need to be aggressive often stems from his/her sense of not feeling good about oneself. Assisting the person to find more effective and less destructive strategies to handle job responsibilities allows the company to retain someone who might otherwise be a productive employee.

A company or organization’s efforts to handle workplace bullying relies on those in decision-making roles to be aware that a problem exists and develop a plan of action for the changes necessary to become a healthy and safe place for all people to work. A workplace that prevents bullying can improve productivity and increase worker morale.

FROM OUR FILES:

Anger Control Disorder Linked to Dysfunction In Prefrontal Circuit

Scientists have tied dysfunction in a particular region to a psychiatric disorder marked by impulsive aggression. The findings extend the link that has been reported between the orbital/medial prefrontal cortex circuit (OMPCC) and impulsive aggression.

The researchers studied 24 patients diagnosed with intermittent explosive disorder (IED). IED is considered an impulsive disorder characterized by outbursts of anger that far outweigh the provocation and that lead to aggressive acts.

For one, IED patients showed marked differences from other study participants in tests of “emotion recognition.” For example, IED patients were more likely to perceive “neutral” facial expressions as “disgusted” and “disgusted” expressions as “angry.”

(Reuters Health Information– May 2002)

Violent TV, Video Games Influence Kids Being Physically Aggressive

A six-month study, co-sponsored by David Walsh, head of the National Institute on Media and the Family found that children who watch violent television shows or play violent TV games are more physically aggressive and more distrustful. The study involved 219 Minnesota children in the third, fourth and fifth grades in public and private schools in urban, suburban and rural areas.

Students were asked to complete a survey about their television viewing and video-game habits and take a standardized test to rate their level of trust and suspicion of others. The study also included an evaluation by teachers on how well the students get along with others.

The findings showed a link between children’s exposure to high levels of television and video-game playing and negative behavior that includes name-calling, making threats and spreading rumors.

(From Join Together, August 2002)

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ◆ The Outlook Associates of New England website (www.outlookassociates.com) now has a Self Help page. This page is primarily geared for clients who have completed our anger management program and would like to have access to material that was covered in the model. The page also includes a bibliography for clients who would like to learn more about anger issues.